COMEDIES AND FARCES

W. D. HOWELLS

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MINOR DRAMAS

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MINOR DRAMAS

BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

VOLUME II

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET
1907

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A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

I

MR. AND MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS

MRS. ROBERTS, looking in upon her husband from the door of the library in their apartment at Hotel Beltingham: "Well, you've got rid of him, Edward."

ROBERTS: "Yes, at last, thank Heaven!" He continues writing at his table, without looking up, as he answers his wife. "But I thought he never would go, at one time. He isn't a bad kind of fellow, for an Englishman, and if I hadn't been so busy with this paper, I shouldn't have minded his staying. Of course he was nationally English, but personally he was rather nice. Still, it was a terrible interruption, just at this moment."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why didn't you hint to him, somehow, to go away?"

ROBERTS: "Well, I couldn't do that, you

know. I really liked him. He was so very amiable."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, his being amiable is no excuse. You're amiable yourself, Edward—*too* amiable, if anything. I don't call it amiable to take up almost a full hour of your precious time. I should think any one who came in and saw how busy you were, now, would go away if he had a heart of *stone*. No, I can't believe he was truly amiable; and I must really do something to protect you from these constant interruptions. How do you think I'd better do it?"

ROBERTS, writing: "Do what?"

MRS. ROBERTS, sinking into a chair, and folding her hands in her lap: "Protect you from these interruptions."

ROBERTS, writing: "Protect *who*?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You, Edward. My heart bleeds for you, to see you so driven with your work, and then people coming in and sitting down and talking to you. I must *stop* it."

ROBERTS, writing: "Oh yes. Stop what?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "These perfectly killing interruptions. I should think you would go crazy."

ROBERTS, writing: "Who?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why you, you poor thing. I think it's worse than cruelty to animals."

ROBERTS, writing: "Worse than cruelty to animals. Worse— Why, what nonsense is this you've made me write, Agnes?" He looks up at her in a daze. "What *do* you want, Agnes? And *do* state it succinctly, my dear!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, I didn't know but you'd asked him to stay to lunch."

ROBERTS, writing again: "No; I didn't really feel that I could give the time. I should have liked to do so, and I suppose it was rather shabby not to. It was the least he could have expected." He continues writing. "But I've done the next best thing. I've given him a letter of introduction to Uncle Philip, and he will glut him with all kinds of hospitality when he gets to New York."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes." After a moment. "Do you think it was quite right, Edward?"

ROBERTS, looking up: "Right? What right?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "To put him off on your uncle, if you didn't like him yourself?"

ROBERTS: "But I *did* like him. I liked

him as well as it's possible to like any Englishman on short notice. You have to know an Englishman several days before you're sure you like him; but this one was really very pleasant, and I told Uncle Philip he would probably find him so, unless I was greatly deceived. But now, Agnes, you must really let me go on—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Surely, Edward, you didn't put that into a letter of introduction?"

ROBERTS, laughing: "That I would have to leave open for him to read? Well, I'm not quite so bad as *that*, Agnes. I wrote a letter to Uncle Philip, to go through the post, and I told him that as soon as he got through the crust of a rather insular manner, and a most unaccountable enthusiasm for Americans, I'd no doubt he'd find my Englishman charming. You couldn't suppose I'd put all that in a letter of introduction?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Of course not. But you know you *are* so absent-minded, my dear, and I couldn't help being a little afraid—"

ROBERTS: "Your fears come too late, my dear. The Englishman is gone, and both the letters with him. Now you *must* let me finish this—"

MRS. ROBERTS, rising to her feet in amazement: "Both the letters with him?"

ROBERTS: "Yes; I knew he would pass the letter-box on the corner, and I asked him to drop Uncle Philip's letter in it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Wasn't that rather peculiar, Edward?"

ROBERTS, with vexation: "Peculiar? No! What was peculiar about it?"

THE VOICES, in the ante-room, without, of MR. and MRS. WILLIS CAMPBELL:—

HE: "In the library? Well, we'll just push right in on them."

SHE: "And Mrs. Roberts is there too?"

ROBERTS: "Oh, good heavens! Go out, Agnes, and stop them! Take them into the parlour a moment, do, till I get this—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You *know* I can't do that, Edward!" To MRS. CAMPBELL, at the door: "Ah! Come in, Amy! I'm *so* glad to see you." The ladies kiss, and CAMPBELL follows his wife in.

II

MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL; THE ROBERTSES

CAMPBELL: "And so is Roberts; but he doesn't look it. Hope I don't interrupt

you, Roberts, as people say when they know they do."

ROBERTS, who has pushed away his writing, and risen to greet the intruders with forced gaiety: "How do you do, Amy? No; I was just getting to the end of my morning's work, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "Well, it 'll do you good to break off before you reach the very tip, then. Keep you from having that tired feeling, you know. What you need is a little dynamite to blast you out of your chair, here, every morning at half-past twelve. If you keep on writing close up to lunch, you 'll spoil your digestion."

ROBERTS: "Well, I shan't this morning. I 've had an Englishman here for the last hour, and I feel as if I could digest almost anything."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why, it must have been *your* Englishman, then, whom we met at the corner, as we came here! There, Willis! I told you it was an Englishman!"

CAMPBELL: "I couldn't believe it: he was so confoundedly agreeable, and he had so much of that English brogue, when he spoke, that I thought he must be a New Yorker."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, how came he to talk with you?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, he was hanging round a telegraph pole, trying to post a letter in the fire-alarm box. He said he 'd been asked to post it by a gentleman who had told him there was a letter-box at the first corner, and the fire-alarm looked like it. I had to take him by the elbow, and steer him across the street to the green box on the lamp-post. He didn't seem to like the way it opened its mouth at the top like a dying frog, but he risked his letter in it, anyway."

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, Edward!"

CAMPBELL: "Hello! Where does Roberts come in?" MRS. ROBERTS maintains a reproachful silence, and CAMPBELL turns to ROBERTS: "Look here, Roberts, what have you been doing? It wasn't *you* who gave that poor young Englishman that letter to post?"

ROBERTS, trying to put a bold face upon it: "Nonsense! Certainly I did. I had given him a letter of introduction to Uncle Philip—he thinks he may go on to New York to-night, by the boat—and I asked him to post the letter I wrote to advise Uncle Philip of his coming. That 's all."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Of course it was all right. But it seemed a little odd when Edward first told me."

CAMPBELL: "Did you make your uncle the usual little confidences about the introducee in your letter of advice?"

ROBERTS: "I told him I knew he would like him after he had got through his insular manner."

CAMPBELL: "And then you got him to post the letter! Well, it *was* something like seething the kid in its mother's milk, Agnes."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What a disgusting idea! Mr. Roberts, don't mind him! He isn't *worth* it. His one idea is to tease."

ROBERTS: "I see what you mean, Campbell. But of course he couldn't know what was in it, and it seemed very simple and natural to get him to drop it in the box."

CAMPBELL: "It *was* simple, and it was *very* natural. A less absent-minded man's wife might have told him it wasn't exactly delicate, even if the fellow couldn't have known what was in it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And in *you* it *would* have been indelicate; but with Mr. Roberts it 's a very different thing."

CAMPBELL: "Oh yes; I know! Absent-

mindedness. Well, Roberts, you 'll get yourself into an awful mess with your absent-mindedness some day. How do you know he didn't know what was in the letter to your uncle?"

ROBERTS, with some scorn: "Why, simply because I sealed it before I gave it to him."

CAMPBELL: "And did you seal the letter of introduction?"

ROBERTS: "Of course not!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, you didn't! Then how do you know that you didn't seal up the letter of introduction, and give him the letter of advice to carry with him?"

ROBERTS: "Because I *know* I didn't."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, *that's* no reason! Now be careful. Would you swear you didn't? Suppose you were on the witness-stand!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, don't suppose it, Mr. Roberts. Don't suppose anything of the kind."

CAMPBELL, without regarding her: "This sort of thing is done every day. People are always getting letters mixed, and shuffling them into the wrong envelopes. Amy did something of the kind herself down at the Shore last summer, and nearly broke off the engagement between young Welling

and Miss Greenway. And if she hadn't been the most sensible kind of a girl, Amy *would* have done it too. And as it was, I had to do some of the tallest lying this side of the Pacific slope. Perfect *sequoias*— made our place, down there, look like the Yosemite Park, when those fables began to tower up."

MRS. CAMPBELL, faltering: "It's true, Agnes. I told you about it, you remember."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, I know. But that doesn't prove that Edward—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, doesn't it! If Amy, who has her few wits always about her, could do such a thing, it stands to reason that Roberts, whose multitudinous mind is always off somewhere else when it's wanted, would do it nine times out of ten. Think how absent-minded he is! Remember how he got aboard the sleeping-car that night, and went prying round in all the berths to find you?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't be offensive, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "I'm simply veracious! And then think how he left his watch in his room, and thought poor old Bemis was a garotter that had taken it from him, and ran after him on the Common, and grabbed

Bemis's watch from him, and nearly killed him. And then his going to meet a cook that he'd never seen at the Albany depôt, and getting into that scrape with Mrs. McIlheny."

MRS. ROBERTS: "That was *my* fault, Willis. I sent him; and I ought to have remembered that he 'd never seen the cook."

CAMPBELL: "Oh! And what ought Roberts to have remembered? I tell you, he's put that Englishman's letter of introduction into the sealed envelope, and the letter of advice into the open one, beyond the shadow of a doubt."

ROBERTS, with rising alarm: "Oh, pshaw! You know you don't think so, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "Think so? I know it! Where was he sitting?"

ROBERTS: "Where you are now."

CAMPBELL: "In this chair? When you wrote the letters, which did you finish first?"

ROBERTS: "The letter of introduction, I think."

CAMPBELL: "You think! He can't even remember *that*! Well, can you remember which you *gave* him first?"

ROBERTS: "No, I can't; but it must have been the letter of introduc—"

CAMPBELL: "Did you put both letters in their envelopes before you gave them to him, or did you hand him first one and then the other?"

ROBERTS: "I'm sure I can't say! But my impression is—"

CAMPBELL, waving his conjecture scornfully aside: "Agnes, you see how thoroughly mixed up he is."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, and you've *mixed* him up. I declare—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well, then! If I've mixed him up, I'll let him unmix himself. Then he can't complain. If he didn't blunder with the letters, I suppose my merely *asking* him won't create the fact. I didn't make him do it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And he didn't do it."

CAMPBELL: "He ought to know."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And you *do* know, don't you, Edward?"

ROBERTS: "Why, of course. But anything's possible. And now that Willis has suggested it, why, I can't take my oath—"

CAMPBELL, to the ladies: "You see!"

ROBERTS: "What—what can I do, Willis? The mere supposition of such a thing—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, *I* don't know. Go after the Englishman, I suppose, and try to run him down before he reads your letter of advice." He bursts into a loud, unfeeling laugh, while ROBERTS begins to walk the floor in agitation. "Can you recall any of the expressions you used? Perhaps they weren't so bad."

ROBERTS, pausing and rubbing his forehead: "I think I can. I told Uncle Phil not to mind his insular manner; that he was necessarily offensive as an Englishman; but that he seemed to have a great many good qualities, and was quite American in some of his feelings and ideas, and had an enthusiasm for us worthy of a better cause. I said I had only met him once, but I had no doubt that he would prove worthy of any kindness that was shown him."

CAMPBELL: "Patronising and insulting to the last degree! Well, you've done it, Roberts!"

ROBERTS: "I know—I see! But I didn't mean to be offensive. The fact is, I wrote very hastily; I wanted to get rid of him; my mind was half on my article here—"

CAMPBELL: "And it was in the same divided condition when you put the letters

into their envelopes! What could you expect?"

ROBERTS: "Look here, Willis! Couldn't *you*—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh no! This isn't a thing that *I* can interfere in. If it were a case for ground-and-lofty lying, you might call me in; but where it's principally *tact* that's needed, I'd better leave it to you, my dear fellow." He claps ROBERTS on the shoulder, and breaks down in another laugh.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Now, look here, Willis! This is perfectly outrageous. You haven't the slightest proof in the world that Mr. Roberts has mixed the letters, and it's just your wicked teasing that makes you say he has. If you have any feeling at all, you will stop. *I* think it's gone beyond a joke."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And I do, too, Amy. Of course I think Edward was wrong to send the man to his uncle just to get rid of him; but that's no reason Willis should torment him so."

ROBERTS: "No, no! There's only too great reason to suppose he's right. Good heavens! What shall I do about it?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, if I might venture a

little suggestion without being denounced as a heartless reprobate—"

ROBERTS: "I haven't denounced you, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "My wife and sister have, in your interest, and just when I had thought how to help you out."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, how, Willis?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Tell it, instantly, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "You'd better look him up at his hotel, and pretend you thought you gave the wrong address on the letter to your uncle."

ROBERTS: "That's all very well, but I don't know where he's stopping."

CAMPBELL: "Well, that does rather cut the ground from under us." A ring at the door is heard. "Ah, there he is now, coming back to have it out with Roberts. He's read that letter of advice, and he wants to know what it means. We must go, Roberts; I'm sorry to leave you in this fix, but—"

III

BELLA; THE CAMPBELLS; THE ROBERTSES

BELLA, the maid, coming in with a card for ROBERTS: "The elevator-boy brought

it up. The gentleman is waiting below, sir."

ROBERTS, glancing at the card: "Merciful powers! Willis is right! It is the man himself!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Edward, what do you suppose he wants? But don't be alarmed, dearest! *I* don't agree with Willis in his pessimistic views. I know you can easily explain it."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, *can* he? Well, I think I'll just wait, then, and hear his explanation."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis! You must advise him what to do. You must invent some plan."

CAMPBELL: "*Thank* you! I don't deny that I'm pretty ingenious, and all that; but what you want here is the invention of a Thomas A. Edison. Nothing short of it will ever get Roberts out of *this* scrape."

ROBERTS, trying to pluck up courage: "But I deny that there *is* any scrape. The whole affair is purely hypothetical. There's nothing in the world to prove that I've mixed up the letters, and I deny that I did. The man has simply come back because he's forgotten something, or wishes to make some little inquiry, or—"

CAMPBELL: "Then why don't you have him up at once, instead of letting him cool his heels down there in your front hall? Have him up! It's uncivil to keep him waiting."

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, no." To the maid: "Stop, Bella! No, Willis; we must provide for contingencies. I think Edward is perfectly right, and I know he didn't mix the letters up; but oughtn't we to guard against any chances, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "I should say you ought. And you'd better ring for a policeman to do it. He's an awfully athletic-looking fellow. Those Englishmen often are."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Then, Bella, you must tell the boy to say that Mr. Roberts has just gone out; and that Mrs. Roberts is very sorry—"

ROBERTS: "No, Agnes, that won't do, my dear. I can't allow that. If I've done this thing, I must face the consequences."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, that's what I say. We must provide for contingencies."

CAMPBELL: "He may want to fight you, Roberts, like McIlheny, you know, when you asked his wife whether she was a cook."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Everything depends upon what kind of humour he's in, of course."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Of course. If he's very—boisterous, you mustn't have anything to say to him; but if he's pleasant, or if he's merely cold, or hurt, in his manner, why, I suppose you must ask him to lunch. And Willis and Amy can stay, and help make it go off."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, thank you, Agnes! The Roberts family seem to have a gift for patronising offensiveness; I don't mind it myself, but if I was an Englishman that Roberts had told to his face that he was nationally detestable—"

ROBERTS: "Told to his face?"

CAMPBELL: "It's the same thing—it would take a good deal more than lunch to pacify *me*. I should want *dinner* and not merely a *family* dinner, a snap-shot, accidental thing, but a regular formal affair, with the best people asked, and the chance of other invitations. The least *you* can do, Roberts, is to send for this Englishman's baggage, and make him stay a fortnight with you."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I *had* thought of that, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "You *said—lunch.*"

MRS. ROBERTS: "But our flat is so small, and the children are in the guest-chamber—"

CAMPBELL: "And in the meantime, the Englishman is waiting below in the select society of the janitor."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, my goodness, I forgot all about him!"

ROBERTS: "Yes. We *must* have him up at once, and then act accordingly."

CAMPBELL: "Oh yes; you mustn't give yourself away. If you don't *happen* to have mixed the letters up, you don't want to begin apologising. You will have to judge from his manner."

ROBERTS: "But he was so extremely flattering, so very enthusiastic about us, I'm afraid we can't tell from his manner."

CAMPBELL: "You must draw him out, specifically. Did you ask him how he liked America?"

ROBERTS: "No; I was ashamed to ask him when he told me he had just arrived this morning."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, Amy can ask him. She isn't ashamed to ask anything. And if he begins to abuse us up hill and down dale—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "He had better *not* abuse us! I shouldn't allow it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes, Amy; bear anything! We *must* try to pacify him somehow."

CAMPBELL: "And Roberts had better go out, and meet him in that anteroom of yours —it's as *dark* as a pocket—and make him take off his overcoat—he mustn't allow any refusal—and then kind of linger behind him a moment after you've received him at the door here, and search his overcoat pockets. Very probably he's put the letter into one of them."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do you think that would be very nice, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't know: about as nice as having Amy truckle to his abuse of the country."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It isn't at all the same thing."

CAMPBELL: "It's exactly the same thing." A ring at the door summons Bella away. "He's getting impatient. Well, I shouldn't like to be kept waiting so long myself."

BELLA, returning: "It's the gentleman below, ma'am. The boy says he'd like to know if you got his card."

CAMPBELL: "I thought so. You must let him come up, or you must send word that you 're not at home. You can't prolong the suspense indefinitely."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, Agnes, you can't, really!"

ROBERTS: "We must decide, my dear!"

MRS. ROBERTS, desperately: "Well, then, tell the janitor to send him up, Bella!" As BELLA goes: "And we haven't thought at all how we shall act!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I know *one* thing: if Roberts lets his knees knock together, *so as to be heard*, I won't stand it. I'll leave the house. It 'll be *too* disgraceful. Courage, Roberts! I wouldn't miss seeing how you 'll carry this thing off for any money! I know you 're a perfect moral hero on all ordinary occasions, but in a predicament like this I don't envy you. And the worst of it is, that if the fellow 's a gentleman—and he looked like one, in the English way—you won't be able to judge from his acts how he feels! You 'll have to grope your way in the dark, and— There he is!" A ring is heard. "Now let 's all look unconcerned, as if we were not expecting any one. Amy, you be turning over those photographic views of the White Mountains, in

your pretty, careless way. Agnes, you be examining some object with the microscope. Here, Roberts, you sit down to your writing again. And I 'll be tuning up the family phonograph. That'll give him an idea of a cultivated Boston family at home with itself and at peace with the whole *human* family. And we must all be extremely deferential and — complimentary — so 's to take the bad taste of Roberts's letter out of his mouth." CAMPBELL delivers these instructions in a rapid whisper. As BELLA opens the door to admit the stranger to the anteroom, he continues in a loud, didactic voice: "As you very justly observed, in our present uncertainty as to whether the peculiar parallel markings of the planet Mars are marine canals, or merely magic-lantern displays of the Martians to attract the attention of the telescope man on Boston Common—"

BELLA, announcing the Englishman at the library door: "Mr. Westgate."

IV

MR. WESTGATE; THE CAMPBELLS; THE ROBERTSES

WESTGATE, to ROBERTS: "Ah, I beg your pardon! It 's really very ridiculous, and

I'm quite ashamed to trouble you again, Mr. Roberts. Your letter—"

ROBERTS, coming eagerly forward: "Oh, I'm so glad to see you again, Mr. Westgate. You're just in time for lunch; and I hope you can sit down with us. Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Westgate. My wife hadn't the pleasure of—ah—meeting you before, I think. Let me take your overcoat. You'll find it very hot in our American houses, I'm afraid."

WESTGATE; "Oh, not at all! I'm sure I shall like it. I should *so* like to see one of your furnaces! But I only came back a moment to show you a little mistake—if it *is* a mistake—"

MRS. ROBERTS, eagerly: "I'm so sorry we've only steam heat, and can't show you a furnace; but you'll find it quite hot; and you *must* take off your coat."

WESTGATE: "Why, you're very good, I'm sure. But only for a moment."

ROBERTS: "Allow me!" He possesses himself of WESTGATE'S hat and coat and rushes out into the anteroom with them.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Let me introduce you to my sister, Mrs. Campbell, and my brother, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Westgate." WESTGATE bows to the lady, and then shakes hands with CAMPBELL.

WESTGATE: "Ah! how do you do? I'd no idea—I'm very glad to meet you, I'm sure. I don't know what I should have done with the letter Mr. Roberts intrusted to me—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, that was nothing. I saw that you were on the point of doing something desperate, and I just stepped in. There's nothing I like better than saving human life; and as I've often tried to post my wife's letters in the fire-alarm box at two o'clock in the morning, and never succeeded yet, I had a fellow-feeling for you."

WESTGATE: "H'm! Yes! You see your post-boxes are so very different to ours—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, your London post-boxes are simply delightful! They're just *like* posts—fat ones; and they take in whole packages. But—I hope you *like* America, Mr. Westgate!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, we are always so glad when your countrymen—"

CAMPBELL: "We aim to please."

WESTGATE: "Well, I can't say I like your post-boxes exactly."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, neither do we!"

WESTGATE: "And I'd always heard you

had clear winter weather. I've never seen it more overcast at home."

MRS. ROBERTS: "That is true. It's going to snow, I think. I'm afraid you won't like our snow!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, perhaps, we might have some with the chill off."

WESTGATE, regarding him fixedly for a moment: "Ow! Ah! I see! Very good! Ah, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! And—ha, ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha!—you meant, *coming home from the club!* I hadn't understood your American humour at first. I fancy there's no hope of any good Samaritan to show you to the post-box at two o'clock in the morning hour! Ah, ha, ha!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I've been scolding my husband for troubling you with that letter, Mr. Westgate!"

WESTGATE: "No, really? But I always heard the American ladies were so amiable, you know."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, we *are*, Mr. Westgate! But we have to maintain discipline in the family, you know."

WESTGATE: "Of course. But"—to CAMPBELL—"what did you mean exactly by having snow with the chill off? Such a delightful expression."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't know. Some sort of joke, I suppose."

WESTGATE: "I was sure you did! Ah, ha, ha! Your countrymen are so delightfully humorous—so funny, you know. You know we think you're *such* fun."

CAMPBELL: "Do you think so? I don't think we're half so funny as Englishmen."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "We think you're *twice* as funny as we are, Mr. Westgate."

WESTGATE: "Ow, but really, now!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I don't know how we should have done without your Mr. Gilbert."

WESTGATE: "But isn't he rather exaggerated? I *much* prefer your Joshua Billings. And your after-dinner speakers! Mr. Depew, for instance!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "But the Prince of Wales, you know."

WESTGATE: "Ow! Do you regard him as a humorist? He says some neat things occasionally. But your California humour, now: we've nothing like *that*, you know!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I'm afraid you will make my husband intolerably conceited."

WESTGATE: "Really? Is Mr. — ah — Campbell a Californian? How very delightful! And is that peculiar dialect used by

your California writers spoken in the cities? I should so much like to hear it. I don't think we ever quite get the right accent in reading it."

CAMPBELL: "You 'd hear it everywhere in California. I 'm a little out of practice now, myself; I speak Bostonese, at present: but I recollect very well how the ladies in San Francisco used to say, 'Well, I got the dead wood onto you, that time,' and 'How 're you makin' it, pard?' and 'You bet,' and 'You git!' You mean that sort of thing?"

WESTGATE: "Exactly. How delightful! So very picturesque, you know. So imaginative!"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I suppose there 's more imagination to the acre in California than you 'll find anywhere else in the United States."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And more modesty, Mr. Westgate; more unconscious merit."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I shouldn't like to boast before a foreigner. There 's Chicago. And for a real, unadulterated diffidence, a shrinking, deprecatory little misgiving as to the existence of the outside universe, I think Mr. Westgate will find that Boston takes the cake. In California people don't

know they're modest, but in Boston they *do*. That's the difference."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I hope Mr. Westgate will stay with us long enough to find out that everything you say is a wicked slander, Willis. Why must you rush off to New York at once, Mr. Westgate?"

WESTGATE: "You're very good, I'm sure. But I'm afraid— Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" To CAMPBELL: "That was a very amusing expression of yours! Imagination to the acre! As if it were some kind of crop! Very good! Capital! Ah, ha, ha! And would you be kind enough to explain that expression, 'Take the cake'?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, it comes from the cake walk, you know."

WESTGATE: "Ow!"

CAMPBELL: "Yes. Where the darkies try to see which can put on the most style in a kind of walk-round, and there's a cake up for a prize, and the greatest swell takes it."

WESTGATE: "How very amusing!"

CAMPBELL: "Amusing? It's more fun than a goat!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis!"

WESTGATE: "Oh, but really! *Don't* stop him! It's quite what I came to America

for—those delightful expressions? I don't know why you're all so shy of using them when you come over! We get them in print, but we seldom hear them."

CAMPBELL: "You should go to a ladies' lunch here! You wouldn't hear anything else."

WESTGATE: "Ow! And just what is a ladies' lunch?"

CAMPBELL: "It's the social entertainment of the future. The race is running to girls so, in Massachusetts, that they've got to having these lunches without asking men, so as to see how it will feel when there are no men to ask. Often it's merely a hen feed, where they would like to have men if they could get them; just as a stag-dinner is a good time that women would like to come to if they could. Sometimes it's a virtue, sometimes it's a necessity. But it's always a joke."

MRS. ROBERTS: "You mustn't believe him, Mr. Westgate. He's never been at a ladies' lunch, and he doesn't know how charming they are."

WESTGATE: "Yes, I understand gentlemen are not asked. But—ah, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!—that was a very droll expression of Mr. Campbell's about a goat. More—more

amusing than a goat, I think it was. Will you ladies kindly tell me why a goat should be considered so very amusing? You see I'm beginning to be afraid I can't trust Mr. Campbell."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm afraid you must, in this case. I'm sure we don't know why a goat should be more entertaining than any other animal."

WESTGATE: "Ow! Then you're not *all* humorists, over here? We get that idea, you know. We think you're such *jokers*. But really, you know, I think that some people who do that kind of thing, you know, and have Americans a great deal, don't see the point or their jokes at all times; or not *at once*. Your humour is so different to ours, you know. I've often had the meaning of an American joke occur to me some time after, you know, when I've had leisure to think it out. Still, it *is* very amusing."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But *we* think the English humour so refined—so high-bred."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes! Your jokes bear the stamp of such an old civilisation, my husband says."

CAMPBELL: "So polished with use."

WESTGATE: "Ah, well! I don't know about that, you know. There may be some-

thing in it. But I'm inclined to think—Ah, ha, ha, ha! Very good! Excellent! I didn't catch your meaning at first. *Used so often!* I see! Ha, ha, ha! You ought to come over to us, Mr. Campbell. We've a great many charming Americans; but most of them are quite like ourselves."

CAMPBELL: "Is it so bad as that?"

WESTGATE: "Yes; it's really quite vexing, you know. So very tiresome."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I hope Mr. Westgate will stay with us long enough to see that we've something besides humour—in Boston, at least. You must let us send to the hotel for your trunk—boxes, I *should* say."

WESTGATE: "Ow no! Ow no! I *much* prefer *trunk*."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And *we* prefer *boxes*."

WESTGATE: "No, really?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You must be our guest long enough at least to see something of Boston. Mr. Roberts will take you to the Art Club Exhibition."

WESTGATE: "You're really very good. But I'd really no idea— I only came back a moment on account of a little mistake I think Mr. Roberts made in the let—"

MRS. ROBERTS, hastily: "We think Boston is quite an art centre, now. Amy,

I want Mr. Westgate to see the little Monet in the p— drawing-room."

WESTGATE: "Oh, *do* say parlour! I think it's so much nicer. And without the *u*, please."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I see you're determined to be pleased with everything American, Mr. Westgate, and I'm sure you'll like this Monet."

WESTGATE: "But I beg your pardon! Isn't he French?"

CAMPBELL: "All the American pictures we buy are by Frenchmen."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But *we* much prefer English pictures, Mr. Westgate. You have so much more technique than the French, so much more *school*. I adore Tadema, myself.'

WESTGATE: "But—yes—ah—I think he's Dutch, though?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, as Mr. Campbell was saying, *our* paintings are all by Frenchmen—all that we buy. If you will come with me, Mr. Westgate—"

V

MRS. ROBERTS; CAMPBELL

MRS. ROBERTS: "What in the world has happened to Edward?"

CAMPBELL: "He can't have been searching the man's coat-pockets all this time. Perhaps he 's cut open the lining. Or he 's found the wrong letter, and has gone off and hid somewhere." ROBERTS shows himself at the door. "No; there he is now. I didn't know but he 'd committed suicide. Well, Roberts! Come in, old fellow! The coast is clear, for the moment!" ROBERTS advances spectrally into tne room. "What 's the matter?"

VI

ROBERTS; MRS. ROBERTS; CAMPBELL

They all speak throughout the scene in hoarse whispers, and from time to time the voices of MRS. CAMPBELL and MR. WESTGATE penetrate to them from the drawing-room.

ROBERTS: "Is he gone?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "'Sh! No. He 's in the parlour, with Amy. She 's showing him the pictures. He couldn't go without his hat and overcoat, you know."

ROBERTS: "Yes. I didn't think of that."

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Have you been through his clothes! 'Sh!"

ROBERTS: "No; I hadn't the courage."

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Then where *have* you been? 'Sh!"

ROBERTS: "Sitting out there in the anteroom."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, poor Edward! 'Sh! Did you listen? He still seems very amiable. 'Sh! I don't think he's angry about anything. I don't believe you've made any serious mistake."

CAMPBELL: "Unless he's — 'sh! — dissembling. They're awfully double-faced fellows, Englishmen are. 'Sh! I think he's dissembling. 'Sh!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "'Sh! Nonsense, Willis! He says you made some mistake with the letter; but—"

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Of course you mixed them! He's just lying low. You'd better keep out of his way, Roberts. 'Sh!"

WESTGATE, without: "Then I suppose you've quite a large school of resident artists in Boston?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, without: "Well, no. But we've a very large school of *non*-resident Boston artists. Our painters all have to go to New York to get a living."

WESTGATE, without: "Ow! Then I

suppose New York is the artistic centre of your country?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, without: "Not at all. We have the critics here."

WESTGATE, without: "Then you consider criticism more essential than painting in an artistic centre?"

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! He's getting sarcastic. He's tuning up for you, Roberts. He's tearing off the mask of amiability. Better get out into the anteroom again, Roberts. Agnes can say you were too sick to come to lunch, and we can carry it off somehow. Oh, but—hello! She's asked him to let her send for his boxes—such a delightful expression!—and come and stay with you. I think you'd better be suddenly called out of town. There's no other way for it!"

ROBERTS, with a tremendous effort of moral heroism: "No; I must stay and face it out. It would be cowardly to shirk it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Edward, what courage you *do* have! But what will you say to him! Willis, *can't* you think of something for Edward to say? You know he's never good on the spur of the moment, and you *are*. 'Sh!"

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Don't say anything

at all, till he opens up. But keep treating him beautifully, and then he'll see that Roberts *couldn't* have meant anything by those insulting and patronising expressions. He'll think it's just our Yankee awkwardness and vulgarity."

MRS. ROBERTS, willingly accepting the suggestion: "Yes, just our Yankee awkwardness and vulgarity. I know he'll excuse it, Edward. You mustn't be alarmed. Remember how much *real* courage you always have!"

ROBERTS: "I can't let him excuse it on that ground. No; I must grapple with it frankly."

CAMPBELL: "All right! Only let him grapple first. Don't give yourself away."

MRS. ROBERTS: "'Sh! They're coming back. 'Sh!"

CAMPBELL: 'Sh! Now, Roberts, brace up. 'Sh! Be a man! Be an American! And deny everything!"

VII

THE ROBERTSES; CAMPBELL; MRS. CAMPBELL WITH WESTGATE

WESTGATE: "Your Monet is beautiful, Mrs. Roberts. You know, I think you

Americans are so much more open-minded than we are, and you take up with the new things so much sooner. I don't think the impressionists are to the fore with us yet."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, but I can't allow you to say anything against England, Mr. Westgate!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, indeed; you would find no sympathisers in that, Mr. Westgate."

CAMPBELL: "We gamble on the mother-country every time, here in Boston, at least, and in New York you'll feel as if you'd just got back to London."

WESTGATE: "Well, you know, I should be rather sorry to do that. I came over to see Americans."

CAMPBELL: "Well, you're barking up the wrong tree."

WESTGATE: "Barking up— What a delightful expression! Would you mind saying— Ah! ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Very good! I see! You mean in stripping the bark off for the birch canoes, I suppose. These figurative phrases are so vigorous. And you have so many of them. I've heard Americans use some of them at home. Do you suppose that expression originated with your Indians, perhaps?"

CAMPBELL: "No; they originated the expression, Good Indians, dead Indians. But if you have a fancy for these expressions, Roberts, here, can fill you up with a lot of them."

ROBERTS: "Yes—that is—I do hope you can spend a few days with us before you push on to New York."

WESTGATE: "Why, you're very good, I'm sure. But that reminds me of the letter of introduc—"

CAMPBELL: "You stay on here, and Roberts will paint the town red for you."

MRS. ROBERTS: "You must allow us to send for your boxes."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Your luggage—yes."

WESTGATE: "Ow, but I'd so much rather you'd say *baggage*! I've had it sent to the railway—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Station? That doesn't the least matter."

WESTGATE: "Ow, but it does! I'd *so* much rather say *deepo*, as you do."

ROBERTS: "We can get it perfectly well, if you'll give us your transfer—"

CAMPBELL: "Don't say *checks*, Roberts! There must be some *English* word!"

WESTGATE: "No, really; I must go on to New York. My plans are all made.

But on my return from the West I shall be most happy to remember your kindness. I've only ventured to trouble Mr. Roberts in regard to the mistake he seems to have made with—"

ROBERTS: "I beg you won't suppose—"

MRS. ROBERTS, at the same time: "You mustn't regard it, indeed, Mr. Westgate!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, at the same time: "Mr. Roberts is *so* absent-minded."

CAMPBELL, at the same time: "Roberts is *all* absence of mind!"

WESTGATE: "Ha, ha, ha! But you know— Ah, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! I see! Capital! Oh, excellent. *English* word for checks! Excellent. Ah—would you be good enough to say just what you mean by painting a place red?"

CAMPBELL: "Roberts will show you, if you 'll only stay!"

WESTGATE: "It 's quite impossible, now, at all events." To ROBERTS: "But the letter you kindly gave me to your uncle—"

ROBERTS: "Yes—yes—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You'll like Uncle Philip *so* much! And he'll appreciate the favour Edward's done him in sending—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, at the same time: "He 's so fond of the English!"

CAMPBELL, at the same time: "And he 's right on to Roberts's jokes. They 're always at it together. Back and forth, all the time. If Roberts has put up any little job, Uncle Phil will catch on like lightning."

WESTGATE: "Oh, what extremely delightful expressions! I 'm sure I shan't remember the half of them! But this letter —do you really think—" He takes it from his pocket.

ROBERTS: "Yes—yes. I 'm quite certain he 'll—"

MRS. ROBERTS, at the same time: "Oh yes, indeed! My husband was with him so much at one time! They 're almost of the same age."

WESTGATE: "Oh, indeed! I fancied an old gentleman! Then you think that he 'll understand—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Uncle Philip understands Mr. Roberts and all his ways perfectly. They have such fun when they 're together."

MRS. ROBERTS, at the same time: "It doesn't matter what Edward has written, he 'll take it just in the right way."

CAMPBELL, at the same time: "Yes, he 'll know it 's *some* kind of a joke."

WESTGATE: "Well, you know, I thought

perhaps, myself, it was one of your pieces of American humour."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, it *was*, Mr. Westgate, I assure you it was! Just one of our pieces of American humour—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, indeed; you can depend upon that, Mr. Westgate!"

WESTGATE: "Ah well! If it had been Mr. Campbell here, I should have felt sure of it. But I couldn't be quite so certain that Mr. Roberts—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, when it comes to joking, Americans are all alike. Roberts is a little more alike than the rest of us; that's all. So's Uncle Philip, for that matter. He'd take it right even if Roberts hadn't written anything at all."

WESTGATE: "But that's just what Mr. Roberts has done!"

ALL THE OTHERS: "What!"

WESTGATE, handing the envelope to ROBERTS, who finds it empty, and passes it to his wife, who in turn hands it silently to MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course, I wished to read the kind things you'd said of me as soon as possible, and I was greatly surprised to find no letter in this envelope. I wasn't sure whether you intended me simply to present the envelope to your uncle, or

whether— At all events, I decided I'd better come and ask."

CAMPBELL, who has possessed himself of the envelope: "Why, look here, Roberts! You put both letters in that sealed envelope I kept Mr. Westgate from posting in the fire-alarm box."

ROBERTS: "Why, so I must! Really, Mr. Westgate, I don't know what to say!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, Edward, I don't know what you *will* say!"

CAMPBELL: "Roberts, you're incorrigible! When *will* you give up this habit of practical joking? Really, old fellow, you ought to stop it. You and Uncle Phil have kept it up long enough. And *I* think you owe Mr. Westgate an apology. The joke's on Uncle Phil, of course; but you ought to see that it's rather embarrassing to Mr. Westgate to find himself the bearer of an empty envelope instead of a letter of introduction. Come, now, *you must explain*; and we'll all apologise for you." ROBERTS waits with a foolish face of deprecation, turning to horror, at the suggestion of an explanation. "Come! You owe it to yourself, as a joker."

WESTGATE, amiably: "Ow, now! Not

at all. *No* apologies. I shouldn't be able to forgive myself if I couldn't allow a man his joke. But I *should* like an explanation, you know. Your humour is so *very* different from ours, and I don't believe any one at home, if I said you had given me an empty envelope to carry to your uncle, *could* feel the spirit of it. And these things are so tiresome, you know, when they happen to fall flat. I hope you won't think me importunate if I say I should like to know just where the laugh comes in on a thing of that kind?"

CAMPBELL: "Out with it, Roberts!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Don't you think— Oh, I'm sure you'll spoil it, Edward!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't you think you'd better leave it to Uncle Philip?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, that's an inspiration, Amy. Leave it to Uncle Phil, Roberts!"

ROBERTS, with a deep sigh of relief: "Yes, that will be best. My Uncle Philip will tell you, if you don't mind."

BELLA, at the door: "Lunch is served, Mrs. Roberts."

MRS. ROBERTS, gaily: "I'm going to lead the way with Mr. Westgate. Edward, bring Amy. And, Willis, you can—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, come now! None of

your little unconscious jokes, Agnes! I won't stand it from my own sister."

WESTGATE: "Ow! Do the American ladies often make jokes without knowing it, Mrs. Roberts?" To CAMPBELL: "But what is just the point of— Ow, I see! Very good! Ha, ha, ha! And shall we have some distinctively American dishes, Mrs. Roberts? You know I'm so very, very curious about your chowder, and dough-nuts, and maple syrup, and buck-wheat cakes, and corn-dodgers, and hoe-downs. Such delightful names. They really make one's mouth water." He goes out with MRS. ROBERTS.

CAMPBELL, lingering, and detaining his wife and ROBERTS: "Roberts, can't you dance a hoe-cake for him? You ought to do it on your knees, you miserable sinner!"

THE UNEXPECTED GUESTS

Mrs. Willis Campbell's Drawing-room

I

MRS. CAMPBELL; CAMPBELL; DR. LAWTON

DR. LAWTON: "Then truth, as I understand you, Mrs. Campbell, is a female virtue."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It is one of them."

DR. LAWTON: "Oh! You have several!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Legions, Dr. Lawton."

DR. LAWTON: "What do you do with them all?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, we just keep them. You may be sure we don't waste them on *men*. What would be the use, for instance, of always telling Willis the truth? He wouldn't believe it, to begin with."

CAMPBELL: "You had better try me once, Amy. My impression is that it 's the other

thing I can't get away with. And yet I'm a great deal more accustomed to it!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "That is neither here nor there. But what I say, and what I insist, is that the conventional lies that people tell are just as much lies as any—just as wicked, and altogether unnecessary. Why should I send word to the door that I'm not at home, or that I'm engaged, when I'm not, merely to get out of seeing a person?"

CAMPBELL: "Because you are such a liar, my love."

DR. LAWTON: "No! Excuse me, Campbell! I don't wish to intercept any little endearments, but really I think that in this case Mrs. Campbell's sacrifice of the truth is a piece of altruism. She knows how it is herself; she wouldn't like to be in the place of the person she wants to get out of seeing. So she sends word that she is not at home, or that she 's engaged."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course I do. Willis's idea of *truth* would be to send word that he didn't want to see them."

DR. LAWTON, laughing: "I haven't the least doubt of it."

CAMPBELL: "Well, you hoary-headed impostor, what would yours be?"

DR. LAWTON: "Mine? I have none! I have been a general practitioner for forty years. But what time did you ask me for, Mrs. Campbell!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Seven. I don't see what 's keeping them all."

CAMPBELL: "The women are not coming."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why?"

CAMPBELL: "Because they said they were. Truth is a female virtue."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I must say, I don't see why they 're so late. I can't understand, when every woman knows the anxiety of a hostess, how any one can be late. It 's very heartless, I think." MRS. CAMPBELL is in dinner-dress; she remains tranquilly seated on the sofa while she speaks, but the movement of her alternately folded and expanded fan betrays the agitation of her spirits. DR. LAWTON, lounging at large ease in a low chair, regards her with a mixture of admiration and scientific interest. Her husband walks up and down with a surcharge of nervous energy which the husband of a dinner-giver naturally expends when the guests are a little late.

CAMPBELL: "They will probably come in a lump—if they come at all. Don't be

discouraged, Amy. If they don't come I shall be hungry enough, by and by, to eat the whole dinner myself."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "That is a man's idea; you think the great thing about a dinner is to get it eaten."

DR. LAWTON: "Oh, not *all* of us, Mrs. Campbell!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, I will except you, Dr. Lawton."

CAMPBELL: "And what is a woman's idea of a dinner, I should like to know?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "To get it over."

CAMPBELL: "In this instance, then, I think you're going to fail. I see no prospect of your getting it over. The people are not coming. I guess you wrote Thursday when you meant Tuesday: didn't you, Amy? Your Tuesdays always look like Thursdays, anyway."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Now, Willis, if you begin your teasing!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, what I want you to do, is to tell them what you really think of them when they do come. I don't want any hollow-hearted pretence that it isn't at all late, and that you did not expect them before, and all that kind of thing. You just say, *Yes, you are rather behind time;*

and *No, I didn't write half-past seven; I wrote seven.* With all your devotion to truth, I 'll bet you wouldn't dare to speak it once."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What will you bet? Come now! Dr. Lawton will hold the stakes."

CAMPBELL: "Ah, *I* should have to pay, whichever lost, and Lawton would pocket the stakes."

DR. LAWTON: "Try me!"

CAMPBELL: "I'd rather not. It would be too expensive." A ring is heard; and then voices below and on the stairs. "The spell is broken! I hear the stentorian tones of my sister Agnes."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, it *is* Agnes; and now they 'll all come." She runs out to the space at the top of the stairs which forms a sort of passage-way between the drawing-room and library. "O Agnes! I'm *so* glad to see you! And Mr. Roberts!" She says this without, and the shock of kisses penetrates to the drawing-room, where CAMPBELL and DR. LAWTON remain.

MRS. ROBERTS, without: "Amy, I'm quite ashamed of myself! I'm afraid we're late. I think Edward's watch must be slow."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, Aunt Mary!" She runs out to meet her.

CAMPBELL, to DR. LAWTON: "You see! she can't tell the truth, even by accident."

ROBERTS: "What in the world do you mean, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "'Sh! It's a bet." To MRS. CRASHAW, coming in with his wife: "You *are* pretty well blown, Aunt Mary."

IV

MRS. CRASHAW; MRS. CAMPBELL; AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CRASHAW: "Blown? I wonder I'm alive to reproach Amy for these stairs. Why don't you live in a flat?"

CAMPBELL: "I am going to put in an elevator here, and you can get stuck in it."

MRS. CRASHAW: "I dare say I shall, if *you* put it in. What a frightful experience! I shall never forget that night. How d'ye do, Edward?" She shakes hands with ROBERTS and MR. BEMIS. "How do you do, Mr. Bemis; I *know* how Dr. Lawton does without asking."

DR. LAWTON, gallantly: "All the better for—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "*Don't* say, for seeing me! We may *be* chestnuts, doctor, but we needn't speak them." To MRS. CAMPBELL: "Are you going to have the whole elevator company, as usual?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes—all but Mr. and Mrs. Miller. I asked them, but they had an engagement."

MRS. CRASHAW: "So much the worse for them. Mrs. Curwen will be very much disappointed not to see—Mrs. Miller." The men laugh. She shakes her fan at them. "You ought to be ashamed to provoke me to say such things. Well, now, since I'm here, I wish the others would come. I'm rather hungry, and it's late, isn't it?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Not at all! I don't see why you all think it's late. I'm sure it's very early. Ah, Mrs. Curwen!" She advances upon this lady, who enters with her husband behind her. "So glad you could come. And Mr. Curwen! I didn't hear you coming!"

V

MR. AND MRS. CURWEN AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CURWEN: "That proves you didn't eavesdrop at the head of the stairs, my dear.

We were quarrelling all the way up to this threshold. After I'd answered it, I mislaid your invitation, and Mr. Curwen was sure we were asked for Wednesday. But I knew better. As it is, I'm afraid we're rather late."

MRS. CAMPBELL, forcing a laugh: "We rarely sit down before eight. Oh, Mrs. Bemis! How do you do, Mr. Bemis!" She greets young MR. and MRS. BEMIS with effusion, as they come in with an air of haste.

VI

YOUNG MR. AND MRS. BEMIS AND THE OTHERS

MRS. BEMIS: "Oh, I *know* we're frightfully late!"

BEMIS: "Yes, it's quite shocking—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Not at all! Really, I think it must be a conspiracy. Everybody says they are late, and I don't know why."

CAMPBELL: "I do; but I don't like to tell."

DR. LAWTON: "Much safer, my dear boy! Much!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, ignoring this passage: "If I should make you wait, just to *show*

you that it was early, I don't think it would be more than you deserve."

CAMPBELL: "Probably, if you did that, Miss Reynolds would get here too soon."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes; and she's usually so prompt."

MRS. CURWEN: "I'm beginning to have the courage of my convictions, Mrs. Campbell. Are you *sure* you didn't say half-past?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I'm sure I can't say. Very likely I may have done so in your note. But I don't see why we are so inflexible about dinner engagements. *I* think we ought to give people at least three-quarters of an hour's grace, instead of that wretched fifteen minutes that keeps everybody's heart in their mouth." The door bell sounds. "Ah! That's Miss Reynolds's ring, and—"

CAMPBELL: "We are saved! I was afraid we were going to be thirteen at table."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Thirteen! What do you mean, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, one from twelve, you know."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes." The others laugh.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't notice him, Agnes. He's in one of his very worst ways to-night."

MRS. ROBERTS: "But I don't see what the joke is!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Neither do I, Agnes. I—"

A GHOSTLY VOICE, as of an asthmatic spectre speaking through an imperfectly attached set of artificial teeth, makes itself heard from the library: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again. For God's eternal years are hers—er—r—r—ck—ck—cr—cr—cr—ee—ck—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Good heavens, Willis, what in the world is that?"

THE VOICE: "This is the North American Company's perfected phonograph, invented by Thomas A.—cr—cr—cr—ee—ee—ck—ck—ck—New Jersey. This cylinder was—cr——cr—elocutionist—ee—ee—ck—ck—Cullen Bryant— Truth crushed to—cr—cr—ck—ck—"

CAMPBELL: "Don't be alarmed, Aunt Mary. It's just a phonograph that I had got in to amuse you after dinner. It don't seem to be exactly in order. Perhaps the cylinder's got dry, or Jim hasn't got quite the right pressure on—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Is Jim in there?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes; Agnes has lent him to us to-day. I adore boys, and Jim has been angelic the whole afternoon."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, you're *too* good, Amy!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "I don't wonder he's been angelic, with a thing like that to play with. I should be angelic myself. Why can't we go and be amused with it a little before dinner, Willis?"

THE OTHERS, respectively: "Oh yes. Do. By all means. I never heard one before. We really can't wait. Let us hear it now, Mr. Campbell! Do make him, Mrs Campbell."

CAMPBELL: "Well, all right. I'll go with you—" He stops, feeling himself significantly clutched by the wrist, and arrested in mid-career, by MRS. CAMPBELL. "Or, Jim can show it off. It'll do him so much good. I'll let Jim." The guests follow one another out with cries of real and simulated interest, and CAMPBELL turns to his wife: "What in the world is it, Amy?"

VII

MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What is it? I shall die, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, speak first."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Something's happened

to the dinner, I know. And I'm afraid to go and see. The cook's so cross!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, shall *I* go!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And if you keep up this teasing of yours, you'll simply kill me."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I won't then. But it's very lucky your guests are belated too, Amy. Now, if you *could* get the dinner on in about ten minutes, we should be just right. But you've told them all they were so early that they'll believe the delay is all yours."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "They won't believe anything of the kind! They know better. But I don't dare—"

JANE, the waitress, appearing through the *portière* of the drawing-room: "Dinner is ready, Mrs. Campbell."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh well, then, do get them started, Willis! Don't forget, it's young Mrs. Bemis you're to take down—*not* Mrs. Curwen."

CAMPBELL: "Oh no! I shan't forget that. I hope Mrs. Curwen won't. Hello! There's another ring. Who in the world is that?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "'Sh! If that horrid, squeaking phonograph—"

THE PHONOGRAPH, from the library: "Truth crushed to earth will—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Good gracious! I can't hear a word. Hark! It's Miss Reynolds talking with some one in the reception-room, and it sounds like—but it can't be—no, it can't—it—it *is*—yes! And that's *his* voice too, Willis! What does it mean? Am I losing my five senses? Or am I simply going stark, staring mad?"

CAMPBELL: "You don't say the Millers have come?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "The Millers? No! who cares anything about the Millers? 'Sh!" She listens.

CAMPBELL, listening: "Why, it's the Belforts!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "How can you *dare* to say it, Willis? Of course it's the Belforts. Hark!" She listens.

CAMPBELL, listening: "But I thought you said they declined too."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "They did. It's some frightful mystery. Be still, do, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "Why, I'm not making any noise. It's the *frou-frou* of that dress of yours."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It's your shirt-bosom.

to the dinner, I know. And I'm afraid to go and see. The cook's so cross!"

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MRS. CAMPBELL: "It's your shirt-bosom.

You always *will* have them so stiff; and you keep breathing so."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, well, if you don't want me to breathe!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, desperately: "It doesn't matter. It wouldn't help now if you *never* breathed again. Don't joke, Willis! I can't bear it. If you do, I shall scream."

CAMPBELL: "I wasn't going to joke. It's too serious. What are you going to do?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I don't know. We must do anything to keep them from finding out that they weren't expected."

CAMPBELL: "But how do you suppose it's happened, Amy?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I don't know. They meant to decline somewhere else and accept here, and they mixed the letters. It's always happening. But be still now! They're coming up, and all we can do is to keep them in the dark as well as we can. You must help me, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, there's nothing I like better than throwing dust in people's eyes. It's my native element."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course it puts the table all out, and we've got to rearrange the places, and think who is going to take out who again as soon as we can get rid of

them. Be making up some pretext, Willis. We've got to consult together, or else we are completely lost. You'll have to stay and keep talking, while I run down and make them put another leaf into the table. I don't believe there's room enough now, and I'm not certain about the quails. The cook said she didn't believe they were all nice. How can people be so careless about notes! I think it's really criminal. There ought to be something done about it. If people won't read their notes over, they ought to be told about it, and I've the greatest mind to say at once that they sent a refusal, and I wasn't expecting them. It would serve them right."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, and it would be such a relief to your feelings. I wish you *would* do it, Amy. Just for once."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I shall have to take the table-cloth off if I put another leaf in, and the whole thing has got to be rearranged, decorations and everything; and I'd got the violets scattered so carelessly. Now I shall just *fling* them on. I don't care how they look. I'm completely discouraged, and I shall just go through it all like a stone."

CAMPBELL: "Like a precious stone. You *are* such a perfect little brick, Amy."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I guess you wouldn't like it yourself, Willis. And the Belforts are just the people I should have liked to do my best before, and now their being here spoils everything."

CAMPBELL, smiling: "It *is* a complication!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh yes, giggle, do! I suppose you'd expect me to be logical, as you call it, with my dying breath."

CAMPBELL: "No, I shouldn't, Amy; but I know you'd be delightful under any circumstances. You always get there just the same, whether you take the steps or not. But brace up now, dear, and you'll come out all right. Tell them the truth and I'll stand by you. I don't want any better fun." He slips behind his wife, who gives him a ghastly glance over her shoulder as the BELFORTS enter the room with MISS REYNOLDS.

VIII

THE BELFORTS; MISS REYNOLDS; AND THE CAMPBELLS

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, how do you do, Maria?" She kisses MISS REYNOLDS, and

then, with gay cordiality, gives her hand to MRS. BELFORT. "I'm *so* glad to see you!" She shakes hands with BELFORT. "So kind of you to come."

MISS REYNOLDS: "I'm sorry to be a little late, Amy; but better late than never, I suppose."

MRS. BELFORT: "I'm not so sure of that. Dear Mrs. Campbell! I wish you would be quite frank with me!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Late? Frank? What do you mean, both of you? You know you're never late, Maria; and why should I be frank with you, Mrs. Belfort?"

CAMPBELL: "What do you take us for?"

MRS. BELFORT, holding MRS. CAMPBELL'S hand clasped between both of hers: "For the very nicest and kindest people in the world, who wouldn't let me have the mortification of deranging them on any account. Did you expect us this evening?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Expect you? What a strange question! Why in the world shouldn't we expect you?"

CAMPBELL: "What an extraordinary idea!"

MRS. BELFORT: "Because I had to hurry away from Mrs. Miller's tea when I went home to dress, and when I told her we were

coming here to dinner, she said, 'Oh, you are *going*, then?' in such a way that, though she covered it up afterwards, and said she didn't mean anything, and she didn't know why she had spoken, I felt sure there must be some misunderstanding, and I've come quite ready to be sent away again if there is. Didn't you get my note?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Your note? Why, of course I did!"

MRS. BELFORT: "Then it's all right. *Such* a relief! Now I feel that I can breathe freely again."

MR. BELFORT: "I assure you, Mrs. Campbell, it's a relief to me too. I've never seen my wife of quite so many minds as she's been for the last hour and a half. She was quite encyclopædic."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I know how that is, my dear boy. I've known Mrs. Campbell change hers as often as an unabridged dictionary in great emergencies."

MRS. BELFORT: "But, really, the only thing for us to do was to come, as I felt from the beginning, in spite of my doubts what to do. I thought I could depend upon you to send us away if we weren't wanted; but if we were, and didn't come, you couldn't very well have sent for us."

MRS. CAMPBELL, gaily: "Indeed I should!"

CAMPBELL, gallantly: "The dinner would have been nothing without you."

MRS. BELFORT: "I don't know about that, but I'm sure we should have been nothing without the dinner. We were *so* glad to come. I waited a little while without answering, till I could see whether we could be free of a sort of provisional engagement we had hanging over us. Even after we got here, though, I'd half a mind to run away, and we 've been catechising poor Miss Reynolds down in the reception-room till she wouldn't stand it any longer, and so here we are."

MRS. CAMPBELL; "And I am perfectly delighted. If you had yielded to any such ridiculous misgiving, I should never have forgiven you. I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Miller could have—"

THE PHONOGRAPH in the library: "Truth crushed to earth will cr—cr-r-r-r—ck—ck—cr—"

MRS. BELFORT: "A phonograph! Oh, have you got one? I *must* hear it!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, won't you come into the library? My nephew is in there, driving everybody mad with it. He 'll

be perfectly delighted with a fresh victim."

MRS. BELFORT: "And I shall be charmed to offer myself up. Come, Miss Reynolds. Come, Roger."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, come along, Belfort." He leads the way to the door, and then adroitly slips back to his wife, who has abandoned herself wildly upon the sofa.

IX

CAMPBELL AND MRS. CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, now, what are you going to do, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "*I'm* not going to do anything. *I* haven't been flying in the face of Providence. If ever there was a woman offered a clean and safe way out! But since you preferred to remain in this labyrinth—this Black Forest of improbabilities—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, don't torment me, Willis? Don't you see that her taking it that way made it all the more impossible for me to tell her of the blunder she had committed? I simply couldn't do it, then."

CAMPBELL: "I don't see how you could help doing it, then."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "When she behaved so magnanimously about it, and put herself in my power? I would sooner have died, and she knew it perfectly well. That's the reason she *was* so magnanimous. You wouldn't have done it yourself after that. But it's no use talking about that now. We've got to do something, and you've got to think what we shall do. Now think!"

CAMPBELL: "What about?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, don't tease, dearest! About the trouble — and who shall take out who—and the quails. You know what!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I think if we leave those people alone much longer, they'll all come out here and ask if they weren't mistaken in supposing they were expected."

MRS. CAMPBELL, whimpering: "Oh, there you go! How perfectly heartless!"

X

MRS. ROBERTS AND THE CAMPBELLS

MRS. ROBERTS, showing herself at the door: "Amy, dear, what *is* the matter? Didn't you tell me the Belforts were not coming? Is that what's keeping you out here. I just knew it was!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, Agnes; but do go back to them and keep them amused. Willis and I are trying to think what to do. I've got to rearrange the whole table, you know, and I'm not sure whether there'll be quails enough to go round."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Don't worry about that, Amy. I won't take any, and I'll give Edward a hint about them."

CAMPBELL: "And Roberts is capable of asking you before the whole company why you don't want him to take quail. There's nothing like Roberts for presence of mind and any little bit of *finesse* like that. No, it won't do for the entire connection to fight shy of quail. Mrs. Belfort has got her suspicions roused, and she'd be on to a thing of that kind like lightning. She's got the notion that she wasn't expected, somehow, and she's been making it hot for Amy—trying to get her to own up, and all that. If it hadn't been for me, Amy *would* have owned up too. But I kept my eye on her, and she lied out of it like a little man."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It isn't so, Agnes. He *wanted* me to tell the truth about it, as he calls it—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "What an idea! You might as well have died at once. I don't

see what you could have been thinking of, Willis!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, he can't understand yet why I shouldn't, when Mrs. Belfort asked me if there wasn't some mistake, and literally threw herself on my mercy. She had no business to do it, and I shall always think it was taking a mean advantage; but I wasn't going to let myself be outdone in magnanimity. I shouldn't have thought she would be capable of it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "It wasn't very nice: but I suppose she was excited. We mustn't blame her, and you did the only thing that any human creature could do. I'm surprised at Willis; or, rather, I'm *not* surprised."

CAMPBELL: "Well, don't let it keep you away from our other guests, Agnes."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh yes; *do* go back to them, Agnes dear! I have got to arrange all over again now about who 's to go out with who, you know. I shall want you to let Edward take Mrs. Curwen, and—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Amy, you know I'd do anything for you, especially in a case like this; but I *can't* let Edward take Mrs. Curwen out. I don't mind her flirting; she does that with every one; but she

always gets Edward to laughing so that it attracts the attention of the whole table, and—"

CAMPBELL: "That's a very insignificant matter. I'll take out Mrs. Curwen myself—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, indeed you won't! You always get *her* laughing, and that's a great deal worse."

CAMPBELL: "Well, well, I won't, then. But then we can arrange that afterwards."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, we'll settle it now, if you please; and I don't want you to go *near* Mrs. Curwen. She'll be sure to see that there's something wrong from the delay, and she'll try to find it out, and if she should I shall simply perish on the spot. She'll try to get round you and make you tell, and I want you to promise me, Willis, on your bended knees, that you won't let it out. She's insufferable enough as it is; but if she got to sympathising with me, or patronising me about such a thing, as she'd be sure to do, I don't know what I *should* do. Will you promise?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I promise. Look out you don't tell her yourself, Amy! But now I've got to see that there's enough to eat, under this new deal, and the great question

is about the quail, and I've thought how to manage that. I'll just run down to the telephone, and send to the club for them. We can have them here inside of a half-hour, and never turn a feather."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "O Willis, you *are* inspired. Well, I shall always say that when there is any real thinking to be done— But hurry back, do, dear, and Agnes and I will be trying to settle who shall take out— Oh, I'm afraid you won't get back in time to help us! It takes so long to telephone the simplest thing."

CAMPBELL: "I'll be back in one-quarter of a second." He rushes out, brushing by MRS. CRASHAW, who enters at the same moment from the library.

XI

MRS. CRASHAW AND THE OTHER LADIES; THEN CAMPBELL

MRS. CRASHAW: "Amy, child, what in the world has happened? What are you staying out here away from your company for? Where's Willis going? What's Agnes doing here? It's perfectly scandalous to leave all those people alone!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "O Aunt Mary, if you only knew, you wouldn't scold us! Don't you see the Belforts have come?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Yes, of course they've come, and after they declined; I understand that. But it's only a matter of two plates more at the table—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, is it? And am I to let *him* go down with *her*? The whole affair has got to be planned over, and another leaf put in, and the table rearranged, and I don't know what all."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And Willis has gone down to telephone to the club for more quails."

MRS. CRASHAW, to MRS. CAMPBELL: "You don't mean that you only got just quails enough?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, indignantly: "A dinner for ten is not a dinner for twelve. I may not have kept house so long as you, Aunt Mary, but I'm not *quite* a child!" At this critical moment CAMPBELL returns. "Well, will they send them?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, yes. It's all right. I couldn't get the club, just now; Central was busy; but I've primed Green's man, down below, and he'll call them up in a minute. He understands it. I thought I'd hurry back and see if I could be of

use. Well, have you got things all straight?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "No, we've spent the time in getting them crookeder, if possible. I've insinuated that Amy didn't know how to order her dinner, and she's told me I'm an old woman. I *am* an old woman, Amy, and you mustn't regard me. I think my mind's going." She kisses MRS. CAMPBELL, who clasps her in a forgiving embrace.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Mine's *gone*, Aunt Mary, or I never could have taken anything amiss from *you*! I don't see how I shall live through it. I don't know what to do; it seems to get worse every moment."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Why, you don't suppose the Belforts *suspect* anything, do you?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "That's the worst of it. I thought I ought to let the Millers know who had failed when I asked them so late; and the Belforts were there at tea this afternoon, and Mrs. Miller let out her surprise that they were coming. So, of course, I had a double duty."

CAMPBELL: "But, thank goodness, she was equal to it, Aunt Mary. I've had to do some tall lying in my time, but I never

soared to the heights that Amy reached with the Belforts in my palmiest days."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Well, then, if she convinced them that their suspicions were wrong, it's all right; and if the quails are coming from the club, I don't see what there is to worry about. We must be thankful that you could get out of it so easily."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But we're *not* out of it. The table has to be rearranged, but I can have that done now somehow, while we're waiting for the quails. The great thing is to manage about the going out. It happens very fortunately that if I tell all the other men whom they're to take out, Mr. Belfort can't suppose that he was an afterthought. But I can't seem to make a start with a new arrangement in my own mind."

CAMPBELL: "You've used up all your invention in convincing the Belforts that they were expected. Good gracious, here's Dr. Lawton! What do you want here, you venerable opprobrium of science?"

XII

DR. LAWTON AND THE OTHERS

DR. LAWTON, standing at ease on the threshold of the drawing-room: "Nothing. I merely got tired of hearing the praises of truth chanted in there, and came out here for—a little change."

CAMPBELL: "Well you can't stay. You've got to go back, and help keep the Belforts from supposing they weren't expected, if it takes all your hoarded wisdom as a general practitioner for forty years."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh yes; do go back, doctor!"

DR. LAWTON: "What has been the treatment up to the present time?"

CAMPBELL: "The most heroic kind. Amy has spared neither age nor sex in the use of whoppers. You know what she is, doctor, when she has a duty to perform."

DR. LAWTON: "But whoppers, as I understand, are always of one sex. They may be old; they often are, I believe; but they are invariably masculine."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, that doesn't prevent women's using them. They use all of us."

DR. LAWTON: "Well, then, there's no

need of my going back on that account. In fact, I may congratulate Mrs. Campbell on the most complete success. The Belforts are thoroughly deceived."

MRS. CAMPBELL, with tremulous eagerness: "Oh, do you *think* so, doctor? If I could only believe that, how happy I should be!"

DR. LAWTON: "You may be sure of it, Mrs. Campbell. Belfort doesn't count, of course?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Of course not; men will believe anything that's told them."

DR. LAWTON: "And I don't allude to *him*. But Mrs. Belfort got me to one side as soon as she saw me, and told me she had been afraid there was something wrong, but Mrs. Campbell had assured her that she had got her note of acceptance, and now she was going to give her whole mind to the phonograph's beautiful rendering of Bryant's poem on Truth."

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, Amy, you see there's no reason to worry about that!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "No; the only thing now is to get your dinner on the table, child, and let us eat it as soon as possible."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, if Lawton's telling the truth."

THE LADIES: "Willis!"

DR. LAWTON: "Don't mind him, ladies! The experiences of his early life in California, you know, must have been very unfavourable to a habit of confidence in his fellow-men. I pity him."

XIII

MRS. CURWEN AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CURWEN, appearing with young MR. BEMIS: "Dr. Lawton, I wish you would go and bring your daughter here. She 's flirting outrageously with my husband." In making this accusation, MRS. CURWEN casts the eye of experienced coquetry at young MR. BEMIS, who laughs foolishly.

DR. LAWTON: "Oh, I dare say he won't mind; he must be so used to it."

MRS. CURWEN: "What do you mean, Dr. Lawton? What does he mean, Mr. Campbell?"

CAMPBELL: "I couldn't imagine for the life of me."

MRS. CURWEN: "Can *you* tell, Mrs. Campbell?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, I *never* tell — such things."

MRS. CURWEN: "What mysteries! Well, can you tell me what makes Mrs. Belfort so uncommonly gay this evening? She seems to be in the greatest spirits, laughing with everybody—Mr. Bemis *père*, and Mr. Roberts."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Mrs. Belfort?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Yes. She seems a little hysterical. I wonder if anything's happened?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, sweeping the circle of her confidants with a look of misery: "What could have happened?"

DR. LAWTON: "It's merely the pleasure of finding herself in your company, Mrs. Curwen."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, thank you, Dr. Lawton. I know that I scatter sunshine in my path, but not to that extent, I think." With winning appeal: "Oh, what *is* the cat in the meal, doctor?" To young MR. BEMIS, archly: "*Do* make them tell me, Mr. Bemis!"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, with the air of epigram: "I'm sure *I* don't know." He chokes with flattered laughter.

MRS. CURWEN: "How cruel of you not even to try!" She makes eyes at young MR. BEMIS, and then transfers them rapidly

to CAMPBELL: "Won't you just whisper it in my ear, Mr. Campbell? Mrs. Roberts, you can't imagine what nice things your husband 's been saying to me! I didn't know he paid compliments. And now I suppose he 's devoting himself to Mrs. Belfort. Perhaps it was that made her so lively. He began at once. He 's *so* amusing. I envy you having such a husband always about."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, in the belief that he is saying something gallant: "I 'm sure we 're none of us so hard-hearted as to envy *you*, Mrs. Curwen."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, *thank* you, Mr. Bemis! I shall really be afraid to tell Mr. Curwen *all* you say." She laughs, and CAMPBELL joins her, even under the reproachful gaze of his wife and sister. MRS. CURWEN turns coaxingly to him: "*Do* tell!"

CAMPBELL: "Tell what?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Well—" She pauses thoughtfully, and then suddenly adds: "Who 's going to take me out to dinner."

MRS. CAMPBELL, surprised into saying it: "Why, it 's all disarranged now by the Belforts—" She stops, and a thrill of dismay at her self-betrayal makes itself apparent in the spectators.

MRS. CURWEN, with clasped hands: "*Don't* say by the Belforts coming unexpectedly! Oh, *dear* Mrs. Campbell, I know how to pity you! That very thing happened to me last winter. Only, it was Mrs. Miller who came after she 'd declined; she said Mr. Miller wouldn't come without her. But why do you mind it? *We* all went out pellmell. Such fun! But it must have taken all Mr. Campbell's ingenuity to keep them from suspecting."

CAMPBELL: "More, too. I was nowhere."

MRS. CURWEN, with caressing deference to MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course you were not needed. But isn't it shocking how one has to manage in such an emergency? I really believe it would be better to tell the truth sometimes. Don't you?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It 's all very well telling the truth if they don't suspect anything. But when people tax you with their mistakes, and try to make you own up that they 've blundered, then of course you *have* to deny it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "You simply *have* to."

MRS. CRASHAW: "There 's no other way, in that case, even if you 'd prefer to tell the truth."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, in that case, yes, indeed. *Poor* Mrs. Campbell! I can imagine how annoying it must have been; but I *should* have liked to hear you getting out of it! What *did* you say? *I'm* so transparent, people see through me at once."

CAMPBELL: "Are you?"

DR. LAWTON: "Don't you think you're a little hard on yourself, Mrs. Curwen?"

MRS. CURWEN, with burlesque meekness and sincerity: "No, not the least. It's simple justice." MR. CURWEN enters with ROBERTS. "You can ask my husband if you don't believe *me*. Or no, I'll put the case to him myself. Fred, dear, if people whom I didn't expect to dinner came, *could* I keep them from discovering that they weren't expected? You know how awkward I am about such things—little fibs, and all that?"

XIV

ROBERTS; CURWEN; AND THE OTHERS; THEN THE BELFORTS

CURWEN: "Well, I don't know—"

MRS. CURWEN, shaking her fan at him during the general laugh: "Oh, what a

wicked husband! *You* don't believe I could fib out of such a thing, *do* you, Mr. Roberts?"

ROBERTS, gallantly: "If I knew what the thing was?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Why, like the Belforts— Oh, *poor* Mrs. Campbell! I *didn't* mean to let it out!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, it doesn't matter. Would you like to go and tell the Belforts themselves? Or, you needn't go: they're coming here."

MRS. BELFORT, returning from the library, followed by her husband and the elder MR. BEMIS: "How perfectly the phonograph renders that piece, Mr. Campbell! I've never heard anything like it."

CAMPBELL: "It's all in practice. You wouldn't hear anything else here, Mrs. Belfort. It's my favourite poem. And I'm happy to find that Mrs. Curwen likes it as much as I do."

MRS. CURWEN: "I adore it!"

THE PHONOGRAPH, within: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again."

CAMPBELL: "Every time! But I wish Jim would change the cylinder. I like a little vari—"

A SOUND from the regions below, some-

thing like, "Woor, roor, roor; woor, roor, roor!" and then a voice: "Hello! Is that you, Central? Well, give me two hundred and forty-one, please! Yes, two, four, one: Iroquois Club. Yes! What? Yes, Iroquois Club—two forty-one. Well, hurry up! Is that you, Iroquois? Yes? Busy? Well, that won't work. I don't care if you *are* busy. You've got to take my message, and take it right away. Hear that?"

CAMPBELL: "Hear it? I should think they could! That confounded fool has left the closet-door open!" He rushes out and down the stairs, while the others assume various attitudes of sympathy and dismay, and MRS. CURWEN bows herself into her fan, and the voice below continues.

THE VOICE: "Well, why don't you send them quails you promised half an hour ago? What? Who is it? It's Mr. Campbell. C, a, m, Cam, m, e, l, mel, Campbell. One hump! What? Oh, hump yourself! It's Mr. Cam—"

CAMPBELL'S voice from below: "Why the deuce don't you shut that closet-door? Shut it! Shut it! We can hear you all over the house, the way you yell. Don't you know how to use a telephone? Shut that door, anyway!"

THE VOICE: "Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't think about the door. I didn't know it was open. All right, sir." There is the sound of a closing door, and then, as CAMPBELL rejoins his guests with a flushed face, the woor-roor-rooring of the electric bell begins again. "Iroquois! Is this Iroquois? No, I don't want you; I want Iroquois. Well, is that Iroquois now?" The words are at first muffled; then they grow more and more distinct, in spite of the intervening door. "Yes, quails! A dozen roast quails. You got the order half an hour ago. There 's a lot of folks come that they didn't expect, and they got to have some more birds. Well, hurry up, then! Good-bye! Woor roor!"

CAMPBELL, amid the consternation of the company, while MRS. BELFORT fixes his wife with an eye of mute reproach: "Now, my dear, this is so awful that nothing can be done about it on the old lines."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes; I give it up. Mrs. Belfort, I tried my very best to keep you from suspecting, and even when you did suspect, I'm sure you must say that I did all I could. But fate was against me."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, *poor* Mrs. Campbell! *Must* you own up?"

MRS. BELFORT: "But I don't understand. You got my note of acceptance, didn't you?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But it *wasn't* a note of acceptance: it was a note of regret!"

MRS. BELFORT: "Indeed it was not!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I knew just how it had happened as soon as I saw you this evening, and I determined that wild horses should not get the truth out of me." CAMPBELL and DR. LAWTON exchange signals of admiration. "You must have been writing two notes, declining somewhere else, and then got them mixed. It's always happening."

CAMPBELL: "It's one of the commonest things in the world—on the stage; and ever since a case of the kind happened to Mrs. Campbell down at the Shore, one summer, she's known how to deal with it."

MRS. BELFORT: "But I *didn't* write two notes and get them mixed. I wrote but one, to tell Mrs. Campbell how very glad I was to come. Do you happen to have kept my note?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "They are all here in this desk, and"—running to it, and pulling it open—"here is yours." She reads: "'*Dear Mrs. Campbell, I am very sorry to be so late in answering. An out-of-town*

engagement for the tenth, which has been hanging over us in a threatening way for the past fortnight—'" MRS. CAMPBELL turns the leaf, and continues reading in a murmur that finally fades into the silence of utter dismay.

CAMPBELL: "Well, my dear?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "What in the world is it, child?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Amy!"

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, not *another* mystery, I hope!"

CAMPBELL: "Go on, Amy, or shall I—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, reading desperately on: "'*—for the past fortnight, is happily off at last, and I am very glad indeed to accept your kind invitation for dinner at seven on that day, for Mr. Belfort and myself—*" She lets her hands, with the letter stretched between them, fall dramatically before her.

CAMPBELL: "Well, my dear, there seems to be a pretty clear case against you, and unless you can plead mind-transference, or something like that—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm sure it's mind-transference, Amy! I've often been through the same experience myself. Just take the opposite of what's said."

MRS. CAMPBELL, in a daze: "But I don't

see— Yes, now I begin to remember how it must have been—how it was. I know now, but I don't know how I can ever forgive myself for such carelessness, when I 'm always so particular about notes—"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I've even heard you say it was criminal to read them carelessly. I can bear witness for you there."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I 'm sure I could too, Amy, in a court of justice."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, I was just going out when your note came, Mrs. Belfort, and I read the first page—down to '*for the past fortnight*'—and I took it for granted that the opening regret meant a refusal, and just dropped it into my desk and gave you up. It 's inexcusable, perfectly inexcusable! I 'm quite at your feet, Mrs. Belfort, and I shall not blame you at all if you can't forgive me. What shall I say to you?"

MRS. BELFORT, amiably: "Nothing, my dear, except that you will let me stay, now I 'm here!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "How sweet you are! You shall *live* with us!"

CAMPBELL: "Truth crushed to earth! It 's perfectly wonderful! Mrs. Campbell can't get away from it when she tries her best. She tells it in spite of herself. She supposed

she wasn't telling it when she said there was no mistake on your part; but she *was*. Well, it *is* a feminine virtue, doctor."

DR. LAWTON: "Unquestionably, I think that it came into the world with woman."

MRS. CAMPBELL, with mounting courage: "Yes, a pretty predicament I should have been in, Willis, if I had taken your advice, and told the truth, as you call it, in the beginning. But now we won't wait any longer. The quails will come in their own good time. My dear, will you give Mrs. Belfort your arm? And, Mr. Belfort, will you give me yours?"

MRS. CURWEN: "And all the rest of us?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, you can come out pellmell."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, *dear* Mrs. Campbell!"

EVENING DRESS

I

MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS: "Now, my dear, Amy and I will get there early, so as to make up for your coming a little late, but you *must* be there for the last half at least. I would excuse you altogether if I could, for I know you must be dead tired, up all night, that way, on the train; but Mrs. Miller is one of those people who never *can* listen to reason, and she would take deadly offence if you missed her musicale, and wouldn't forgive us the longest day she lived. So you see?" MRS. ROBERTS addresses herself to her husband in the library of their apartment in Hotel Bellingham, at Boston, as she stands before the fire pulling on a long glove and looking at him across his desk, where he has sunk into a weary heap in his swivel-chair. "You *are* dreadfully used up, Edward, and I think it's cruel to make you go out;

but what can I do? If it was anybody but Mrs. Miller, I wouldn't *think* of having you to go; I'm sure I never want to have her about anyway. But that's just the kind of people that you're a perfect slave to! Now, dear, I've let the two girls go out, and you must remember that you're in the place alone with the children; but you needn't be troubled, because nobody will come after this hour till Willis does, and the girls will be back before that. Willis is to come and get you on his way to the Millers', and it's all been arranged for you, and you needn't think of a thing till Willis comes. You'll have to dress, of course; but you needn't begin that at once, and you can just sit here in your chair and rest." MR. ROBERTS stretches his arms wildly abroad, and, throwing back his head, permits himself a yawn that eclipses his whole face. MRS. ROBERTS lets both her arms fall at her side in token of extreme despair. "Edward! If you *should* go to sleep!"

ROBERTS, pulling himself together with a gigantic effort: "No, no! You needn't be afraid, my dear. But, oh! what *wouldn't* I give for a chance to!"

MRS. ROBERTS, who sinks into a chair and regards the unhappy man with a look

of tender compassion: "You poor thing, I've almost a mind to *let* you!"

ROBERTS, heroically: "No, it wouldn't do, Agnes. I must—ow, ugh, ow—go. Ugh, ow, ugh!" He abandons himself to a succession of abysmal yawns, in which the sequence of his ideas is altogether lost.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, then, I shall have to trust you." She gathers her train up for departure, and moves slowly towards the door. "I don't think I've forgotten anything. Let me see: fan, handkerchief, both gloves; pins, because you're never sure that they've put enough, and you don't know where you'll come apart; head-scarf, yes, I've got that *on*; fur boots, I've got *them* on. I really believe I'm all here. But I shouldn't be, Edward, if it were not for the system I put into everything; and I do wish, dear, that you'd try it once, just to please me!"

ROBERTS, very drowsily: "Try what, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, getting what you have to do by heart, and repeating it over. If you could *only* bring yourself to say: *Both girls out; me alone with the children; Willis at ten; mustn't go to sleep; last half, anyway; Mrs. Miller awfully angry.*

There! If you could say that after me, I could go feeling so *much* easier! Won't you do it, Edward? I know it has a ridiculous sound, but—"

ROBERTS, yawning: "How am I to dress?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward! Well, I always *will* say that you 're perfectly inspired! To think of my forgetting the most important thing, after all! Oh, I do believe there *is* an overruling Providence, I don't *care* what the Agnostics pretend. Why, it's to be evening dress for the men, of course! Mrs. Miller would do it to be different from Mrs. Curwen, who let you come in your cutaways, even if it wasn't the regular thing; and she 's gone around ever since saying it was the most rowdy, Bohemian thing she ever heard of, and she might as well have had beer at once."

ROBERTS: "Who?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, Mrs. Miller."

ROBERTS: "Mrs. Miller going to have beer?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Edward, I don't see how you *can* be so— But there! I won't blame you, dearest. I know you 're just literally expiring for want of sleep, and it seems to me I must be the cruellest thing

in the world to make you go. And if you 'll say the word, I'll smash off a note now at the eleventh hour—though it's two hours of eleven yet!—and just *tell* Mrs. Miller that you 've got home down sick, and I've had to stay and take care of you. Will you?"

ROBERTS: "Oh no, Agnes. It wouldn't be the truth."

MRS. ROBERTS, in a rapture of admiration and affection: "Oh, who *cares* for the truth in such a cause, you poor heroic angel, you? Well, if you insist upon going, I suppose we must; and now the only way is for you to keep everything clearly in mind. You 'd better say it over backward, now, and begin with evening dress, because that 's the most important. Now! *Evening dress; Mrs. Miller awfully angry; last half, anyway, mustn't go to sleep; Willis at ten; me alone with the children; both girls out.* Now, do you think— Ow—e—e—e!" A ring at the door extorts a shriek from MRS. ROBERTS, who simultaneously gathers her robes about her, in order to fall with decency in the event of burglars or fire, while her husband rises and goes to open the apartment door. "Who can it be at this hour? Oh! Amy!"

MRS. WILLIS CAMPBELL, in the doorway: "Oh, Amy, indeed! How d' y' do, Edward! Glad to see you back alive, and just in time for Agnes to kill you with Mrs. Miller's musicale. May I ask, Agnes, how long you expected me to freeze to death down in that coupé before you came?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, Amy, dear, you must forgive me! I was just staying to give Edward his charges—you know he's so terribly forgetful—and I forgot all about you!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Then I wish, the next time, he'd give *you* some charges, my dear. But come, now, do! We shall be rather late, anyway, and that simpleton will be perfectly furious."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, that's just what I was saying to Edward. She'll never forgive you. If it was anybody else, I shouldn't think of dragging him out to-night."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "The worst of a bore like her is that she's sure to come to all *your* things, and you can't get off from *one* of hers. Willis declares he's going to strike, and I couldn't have got him out to-night if I hadn't told him you were going to make Edward go."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, isn't it perfectly wicked, Amy! I know he's just going to have the grippe. See how drowsy he is! That's one of the first symptoms."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It's one of the symptoms of having passed the night on a sleeping-car too."

MRS. ROBERTS: "That's true, and thank you, Amy. I forgot all about that. But now, Edward, dear, you *will* remember, won't you? If I could only stay with you—"

ROBERTS, who has been drowsily drooping in his chair during the exchange of these ideas between the ladies: "Oh, I'm all right, Agnes. Or—ow, ugh, ow!—I should be if I had a cup of tea."

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, I *knew* it. If I had been worth anything at all as a wife I should have had you a cup of tea long ago. Oh, how heartless! And I've let both the girls go, and the fire's all out in the range, anyway. But I'll go and start it with my own hands—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "In those gloves! You're crazy, Agnes! Edward, I'll tell you what Willis does when he's out of sorts a little; he takes a taste of whisky-and-water. He says nothing freshens him up like it."

ROBERTS: "That's a good idea."

MRS. ROBERTS, bustling into the dining-room and reappearing with a tumbler and a decanter: "The very thing, Amy! And thank you *so* much. Trying to make Edward remember seems to put everything out of my head! I might have thought of *whisky*, though! If it's only loss of sleep, it will wake him up, and if it's grippe, it's the most nourishing thing in the world."

ROBERTS: "I'm not going to have the grippe, Agnes."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward! Don't boast! You may be stricken down in an instant. I heard of one person who was taken so suddenly she hadn't time to get her things off, and tumbled right on the bed. You must put some water in it, of course; and hot water is very soothing. You can use some out of the pipes; it's perfectly good."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Agnes, are you *never* coming?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, go along, Agnes, do! I shall get on quite well, now. You needn't wait."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, if I could only stay and think *for* you, dearest! But I can't, and you must do the best you can. Do keep repeating it all over! It's the only way—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, from the door: "Agnes!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Amy, I'm coming instantly."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I declare I shall go without you."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And I shouldn't blame you a bit, Amy! And *if* it turns out to be the grippe, Edward, don't lose an instant. Send for the doctor as fast as the district messenger can fly; give him his car fare, and let one come for me; and jump into bed and cover up warm, and keep up the nourishment with the whisky; there's another bottle in the sideboard; and perhaps you'd better break a raw egg in it. I heard of one person that they gave three dozen raw eggs a day to in typhoid fever, and even *then* he died; so you must nourish yourself all you can. And—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Agnes! I'm going!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm coming? Edward!"

ROBERTS: "Well?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "There is something else very important. And I can't think of it."

ROBERTS: "Liebig's extract of beef?"

MRS. ROBERTS, distractedly: "No, no! And it wasn't oysters either, though they're very nourishing too. Oh, dear! What—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Going, Agnes!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Coming, Amy! Try to think of something else that I ought to remember, Edward!"

ROBERTS: "Some word to the girls when they come in?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "No!"

ROBERTS: "About the children something?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, no!"

ROBERTS: "Willis, then; what Amy wants him to do?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, no, no! I shall surely die if I can't think of it!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, at the door of the apartment: "Gone!"

MRS. ROBERTS, flying after her, as the door closes with a bang: "O Amy! how can you be so heartless? She's driven it quite out of my head!"

II

MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL: "Hello, hello, hello! *Oh*, hello, hello, hello! Wake up, in there! Roberts, wake up! Sound the loud timbrel! Fire, murder, and sudden death! *Wake* up! Monday morning, you know; here's Tuesday, Wednesday, Thurs-

day, Friday, Saturday, all gone and nothing done! Come, arouse thee, my merry Swiss boy! Take thy pail and to labour away! All aboard! Train for Newton, West Newton, Newtonville, Auburndale, Riverside, and Newton Lower Falls, on track No. 5. Express to Newton. Wake up, Roberts! Here's M'Ilheny, out here, wants to know why you took his wife for a cook. Hurry up! he can't wait. Wake up, you old seven-by-nine sleeper, you, or Mrs. Miller's musicale will just simply expire on the spot. Come! It's after ten o'clock now, or it will be in about five minutes. Hurry up! Hello, hello, hello!" CAMPBELL accompanies his appeals with a tempest of knocks, thumps, and bangs on the outside of ROBERTS'S chamber door. Within, ROBERTS is discovered, at first stretched on his bed in profound repose, which becomes less and less perfect as CAMPBELL'S blows and cries penetrate to his consciousness. He moves, groans, drops back into slumber, groans again, coughs, sits up on the bed, where he has thrown himself with all his clothes on, and listens. "I say, aren't you going to Mrs. Miller's? If you are, you'd better get out of bed some time before the last call for breakfast. Now ready in the dining-car."

ROBERTS, leaping out of bed and flinging open the door: "Why, I've *been* to Mrs. Miller's!"

CAMPBELL, entering with his hat on, and his overcoat on his arm: "Oh no, you haven't, you poor, suffering creature! That was a heavenly dream! Why, good gracious, man, you're not dressed!" CAMPBELL is himself in perfectly appointed evening dress, and he stares in dismay at the travelling-suit which ROBERTS still wears. "You can't go in that figure, you know. You might to Mrs. Curwen's, but you'd give Mrs. Miller deadly offence; she'd think the Curwen had put you up to it. Didn't Agnes tell you I'd be here at ten for you? What have you been doing with yourself? I supposed I should find you walking up and down here, fuming with impatience."

ROBERTS: "I was dead tired, and after Agnes went, I just threw myself down here for a moment's rest, and I was off before I knew it—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, hustle! There's no time to lose. We shall be late, but I guess we can get there in time to save Agnes's life if we hump ourselves. Are you shaved?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, I thought I'd better shave before I lay down—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, that's half the battle, and you ought to be into your dress suit in five minutes; but you're an intellectual man, and your fingers are all thumbs, and so I'll give you ten minutes. Hello! What's this?" In speaking of shaving, CAMPBELL has mechanically cast his eye towards the bureau, and has gradually become aware of the half tumbler of water and the decanter of whisky which ROBERTS has left standing there. He pounces upon the decanter, pulls out the stopple, and applies his nose to the mouth. "Ah, ha! *This* is the milk in the cocoanut, is it? No wonder you slept soundly, and had sweet dreams? Well, Roberts!"

ROBERTS: "No, no, Willis! I solemnly assure you I haven't touched a drop of it!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh yes! I know! That's what they always say!"

ROBERTS: "But I tell you, Willis—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, all right, my boy! I don't blame you! You have never fallen before, probably, but you're down this time, old man. You have every appearance of being grossly intoxicated, as the reporters

say, at this instant. Look how red your eyes are!"

ROBERTS: "It 's loss of sleep. I tell you, I haven't tasted the whisky."

CAMPBELL: "But it's half gone!" He lifts the decanter and shows. "Well, I hope Agnes may never know it, and your poor children, Roberts—"

ROBERTS: "Nonsense! Agnes knows all about it. She brought me the decanter herself. She and Amy thought it would freshen me up. But I distrusted it; I was afraid the effect would be soporific—"

CAMPBELL: "And it seems you were perfectly right. Events have proved it. But come, now, don't sit there all night, old fellow." ROBERTS has sunk upon the edge of the bed. "We 've got to be off to this scene of maddening gaiety at Mrs. Miller's. Want a wet towel round your head? Nothing like it, you know!"

ROBERTS, with dignity: "Thank you, I don't need any wet towel, and I 'll be with you in a few moments, if you 'll kindly wait." He moves towards the door of his dressing-room.

CAMPBELL, cheerfully: "Oh, I 'll stay by, Roberts; you needn't be afraid. There's nothing mean about me and you 'll want some-

body to pull you together, now and then, and I know just what to do; I've been through this kind of thing with lots of fellows in California. I know the haughty and self-helpful stage. You're all right, Roberts. But don't lose time. What's the matter now?" ROBERTS has come back from his dressing-room and is staring vacantly at CAMPBELL.

ROBERTS: "I was trying to think where I'd put my dress suit."

CAMPBELL, triumphantly: "Exactly! And *now* do you expect me to believe you haven't been at that decanter? Where do you suppose you put it?"

ROBERTS: "Where I always do, on a hook in my closet."

CAMPBELL: "You hang up your dress suit? Why, it must look like a butler's! You ought to fold your clothes and lay them in a bureau drawer. Don't you know that? Very likely Agnes has got on to that while you've been away, and put them in here." He looks towards the bureau, and ROBERTS tries to pull open one drawer after another.

ROBERTS: "This seems locked. I never lock my drawers."

CAMPBELL: "Then that's proof positive that your dress-suit is in there. Agnes has

put it in, and locked it up, so as to keep it nice and fresh for you. Where 's your key?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know. I always leave it in the keyhole of one of the drawers. Haven't you got a key-ring, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "I 've got a key-ring, but I haven't got it about me, as Artemus Ward said of his gift for public speaking. It 's in my other trousers pockets. Haven't you got a collection of keys? Amy has a half-bushel, and she keeps them in a hand-bag, in the bathroom closet. She says Agnes does."

ROBERTS: "So she does! I 'll just look." While he is gone, CAMPBELL lays down his hat and overcoat, and tries the bureau drawers. ROBERTS returns to find him at this work. "No; she must have put them somewhere else. I know she always used to put them there."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then we 've got to pick the locks. Have you got a boot-buttoner? There 's nothing like a boot-buttoner to pick locks. Or, hold on a minute! We 've got to go about this thing systematically. Now, I don't think you can tell in your condition whether your dress-coat 's in your closet or not, Roberts.

We must bring your clothes all out here and lay them on the bed, and see. That dress-suit may turn up yet. You probably thought it was something like an ulster. I know how a man's ideas get mixed after a little too much freshening up."

ROBERTS, unmindful of his joke: "You 're right, Willis. I may have overlooked it. I 'll bring out everything." He disappears, and reappears with a business suit of black diagonal, which he throws on the bed. "That isn't it."

CAMPBELL, inspecting it: "No; but it isn't so far off. Some of the young chaps have their dress-coats made of diagonal. Try again, Roberts: you 'll fetch it yet." ROBERTS disappears, and reappears with a frock-coat of blue and checked trousers. "Oh, *that* won't do, Roberts. Don't give way like that. Who ever saw a man in evening-dress with check trousers on? Now, what have we next?" As ROBERTS goes and comes, CAMPBELL receives his burdens and verifies them. "A velvet jacket won't do, either, unless you 're a travelling Englishman. Three pairs of summer pantaloons are all very well in their way; but they 're out of season, and stripes are not the thing for evening wear any more. Beautiful bath

gown, but more adapted for amateur dramatics than for a musicale. Two waistcoats and a Norfolk jacket mean well, but are not adapted to the purpose. Exemplary light overcoat, but still not quite the thing. Double-breasted reefer and Canada homespun trousers; admirably fitted for a sea-voyage and camping out. Armload of semi-detached waistcoats and pantaloons; very suggestive, but not instantly available. Pajamas not at all the thing. Elderly pair of doeskin trousers and low-cut waistcoat—Why, hello, Roberts! here 's part of your dress-suit now! Where 's the coat?"

ROBERTS, dropping into a chair and wiping his forehead, while he surveys the tangled heap of garments on the bed: "Given away. Got too small for me three years ago. Agnes kept the waistcoat and trousers for the sake of association, because I told her I wore them at the party where we first met. They won't go half round me now."

CAMPBELL, scrutinising them critically as he holds them: "Well, look here, Roberts, we may have to come to these yet. Stand up, old fellow." ROBERTS mechanically stands up, and CAMPBELL tries the top of the trousers against his waistband. "May

need a little slitting down the back, so as to let them out a third, or two-thirds, or so. But I guess we 'll try an ice-pick first." He flings the clothes on the bed, and touches the electric bell.

ROBERTS: "Ice-pick?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes; nothing like it for prying open bureau drawers." To BELLA the maid, who appears at the door in answer to his ring: "The ice-pick, please."

BELLA: "Ice-pick, sir?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes. The—ice—pick—here—quick."

BELLA, vanishing, with a gesture of wonder, at the pile of clothing on the bed: "All right, sir."

ROBERTS: "But, Willis! Won't it bruise and deface the bureau? Agnes is very careful of this bu—"

CAMPBELL: "Not at all. You just set the pick in here over the lock, and pry. I shan't leave a scratch." They stoop down together in front of the bureau, and CAMPBELL shows him how. "But what are you going to do? You 've got to have your clothes if you 're going to the musicale. Ah, here we are! Thanks," as BELLA comes with the ice-pick, which he pushes in over the lock of the lowest

drawer. "We'll begin with the lowest, because that's where Amy keeps mine; and if Agnes has got on to it through her, she'll be sure to do exactly the same. Now, then, I just scratch the bolt down with my knife, and Open, Sesame! What do you say to bruising your old bureau now?"

ROBERTS, as CAMPBELL pulls out the drawer and sets it on a chair: "Perfect! Only"—he lifts the things from the drawer, and places them on another chair—"there don't seem to be anything here but underclothes."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, we must get the next out. No time to lose. Come! Keep shoving the pick in, and I'll scratch the bolt down with my knife. See? It's nothing." They pull the drawer out and set it on the floor, and ROBERTS ruefully contemplates it.

ROBERTS: "Nothing but shirts, collars, cuffs, and neckties."

CAMPBELL: "Ah, I don't know that. It's a deep drawer"—he begins taking the linen out, and laying it on the floor—"and the dress-suit may be at the bottom. No! Nothing here. You're right, Roberts. Well, now for the top drawer and the last. If we'd taken that out first, we needn't have taken out the second; we could have seen

it in place. You ought to have thought of that, Roberts."

ROBERTS, with injury: "You suggested taking out the lowest first yourself, Willis. You said Agnes would be sure to have put them there."

CAMPBELL: "Did I? Well, I knew I must have a reason for it. But come along now, Roberts, and push the ice-pick in." After a season of experiment with the pick and the pen-knife: "The bolt won't scratch down. What are you going to do now, Roberts?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know."

CAMPBELL: "But you've got to do something, you know. We can't just give it up. Where are those dress-trousers and waistcoat?" He begins tumbling the things on the bed, laying some on chairs, letting others drop to the floor. "Ah, here they are! Now, I'll tell you what, Roberts, you've got to wear these. Go into your dressing-room there and put them on, and then we can tell how much they have to be slit up the back."

ROBERTS: "But where's the coat, even if I could get the other things on?"

CAMPBELL: "We'll think about that later. We haven't got any time to lose in

talk. We can pin back the skirts of your frock-coat, as the travelling Americans used to do when they went to the opera in London. Hurry up!" He gives ROBERTS the garments, and pushes him into the door of his dressing-room, and walks impatiently up and down amidst the chaos of clothing till ROBERTS reappears. "Why, that isn't bad!"

ROBERTS: "Bad? I can't breathe; I feel as if I were being cut in two!"

CAMPBELL: "Nonsense! That's the way every woman feels when she's laced. It gives you a beautiful waist, Roberts! Ah! ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! O Lord! Oh, mercy! Ah, ha, ha, ha!"

ROBERTS: "Now, look here, Willis—"

CAMPBELL, turning him round, and surveying him from different points: "No, no! Don't mind *me*! It's just my way, you know. I don't mean anything by it. I think these things look first-rate on you. There's no mistake about their giving you a youthful figure; we can just let them out a few stitches, and you'll be perfectly comfortable. The only thing now is the coat. I'm afraid that pinning back wouldn't do. We'd better try something else. I'll tell you! Send down and borrow Merrick's

coat! He 's still on the floor below you, I suppose?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, but he 's so thin—"

CAMPBELL: "The very thing! Those thin fellows always have their things made roomy—"

ROBERTS: "But he 's tall."

CAMPBELL: "That 's all right. If you keep these things on you 've got to give in some direction, and you 're probably going to stretch." He rings the bell.

ROBERTS: "But it 's very late. He must be in bed."

CAMPBELL: "I 'll fix that." To BELLA, as she appears: "Bella, I want you to go down to the gentleman under here, and ask him if he won't lend Mr. Roberts his dress-coat. Tell him Mrs. Roberts has gone off to a party, and Mr. Roberts doesn't know where to find his coat."

ROBERTS: "Oh, do you think she 'd better tell him that, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, certainly! You must account for the request in some way. It 'll appeal to his sympathy, and put him into a good-humour if he happens to have to get out of bed to oblige you."

BELLA: "They 're all up yet, sir. I saw their cook on the back stairs when

I came in. They've been giving a dinner—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, run then." To ROBERTS, as BELLA vanishes: "Merrick can take it right off his back. But whilst she's gone we'll just give this lock another chance." They work jointly at the bureau drawer. "No, it won't scrape down. It's probably rusted in. You must get this lock oiled, Roberts." As BELLA returns with a dress-coat in her hand: "Ah, here we are! That's very nice of Merrick. What did he say?"

BELLA: "I didn't see him, sir. The girl brought it."

CAMPBELL: "Well, that's all, Bella." He shakes out the coat as she goes, and looks down at it. "I suppose it amused Merrick. He's got a good deal of humour, Merrick has. I hope he won't give it to the press."

ROBERTS: "Good heavens, Willis! You don't—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, he wouldn't give real names. Merrick's too much of a gentleman for that. Come, try it on. We've got to hurry now." ROBERTS backs towards him with extended arms, and CAMPBELL slips the coat sleeves on them. "Easy,

easy! It may be a little narrow for you in the back— No, sir! It fits you like a glove." He stands off and surveys ROBERTS, after smoothing the coat across the shoulders. "Yes, sir, like a glove—a glove that the pretty shop-girl has put on for you, after she's peppered it full of that white stuff to make it go on, and told you that you could easily wear a size smaller." He begins to laugh as he lifts each of ROBERTS'S limp arms, with the sleeves dangling below his hands, and touches the skirt, which descends to the calf of his leg. "The most youthful figure I ever saw! Looks like a boy in his father's coat. Merrick *is* a tall fellow. I'd no idea—"

ROBERTS, looking ruefully over his shoulder: "You see it won't do, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "No, no! I don't say that, quite. But perhaps we'd better try something else. Who's overhead now?"

ROBERTS, desperately: "Baker. And he's short and fat—"

CAMPBELL: "Short and fat isn't at all bad." Touching the annunciator. "He's probably had his coat made rather long and snug. It'll be the very thing for you. We mustn't leave a stone unturned, or a coat untried." To BELLA, appearing at the

door, and putting her apron up to control herself at sight of MR. ROBERTS's figure: "Do you know whether Mr. Baker's people have gone to bed?"

BELLA: "No, sir. I heard their second girl saying on the stairs that Mrs. Baker was up with a bad toothache."

CAMPBELL: "What a piece of luck! Run right up, will you, and borrow Mr. Baker's dress-coat." To ROBERTS, on BELLA's disappearance: "Baker's coat will be all right; but still we 'd better work away at this bureau drawer again. Drive the ice-pick in a little farther, now." They struggle with lock as before, until BELLA returns, ROBERTS absent-mindedly keeping Merrick's coat on, and from time to time taking a turn about the room to rest his back.

ROBERTS: "Let 's give it up, Willis. We can't get it open. It 's no use!"

CAMPBELL, desisting: "Well, we 'll leave that to the last, then. But I 've the liveliest confidence in Baker's coat. Ah, here it is! Saved! Saved!" He takes the garment from BELLA at the threshold. "Now, then, the great thing is to get Merrick's coat off in one piece. I thought I heard a ripping sound in the back of it when you were straining at that drawer.

But I guess it was merely fancy. Easy, easy!" He helps ROBERTS to get the coat off, and examines it.

ROBERTS, anxiously: "Is it all right?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, it's perfectly sound. You may have started the seams a little, but it's nothing that Merrick will ever notice! Now for Baker! There! Goes on like an old shoe!" He retires a few steps and surveys ROBERTS's back, which ROBERTS is craning his neck round to get a view of in the glass. "*There's* space! Gives you a mighty fine, portly figure, Roberts; it looks *grand* on you, it does indeed. I call that the back of a leading citizen in very comfortable circumstances. Something magisterial about it. Perhaps it's a little full; but that's a good fault; it must set awfully easy. Sleeves are a trifle short, maybe, but not too much to show your cuff-buttons; I hate a coat that don't do that. Yes, I should call that a very nice fit."

ROBERTS, tearing off the coat, and flinging it on the bed: "You know it won't do, Willis. And now I must give the whole thing up. You'd better hurry off and explain to Agnes why I could not come."

CAMPBELL: "Oh no, I can't leave you in

the lurch that way, my dear fellow. Besides, it would break Agnes all up. We must *do* something. *I* think either one of those coats would go perfectly well; but if you're so particular about your personal appearance, there's only one thing left. We *must* get this drawer open. Look here. We'll shove the ice-pick in a little farther, so's to give the bolt the slightest possible catch, and then we'll both pull, you on one handle, and I on the other. It won't hurt the bureau. And besides, it's the only chance left. I suppose these coats *don't* look as if they were made for you. What do you say?"

ROBERTS, disconsolately: "Oh, I suppose we'd better try. It can't be much worse." He casts a hopeless glance around the confused and tumbled room.

CAMPBELL, absently: "Yes. Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, you know. Agnes won't be able to express her feelings anyway when she sees this room. It looks as if a small cyclone had been joking round here; but she'll like your devotion in doing your utmost."

ROBERTS: "Do you think so? I'm not so sure. But we'll try it." He pushes the ice-pick in with all his strength.

CAMPBELL: "That's it! Now then!" They each grasp a handle of the drawer and pull. "One, two, three—pull! Once more—pull! Now the third time—pull! And *out* she comes!" The bolt suddenly gives, and the drawer drops violently to the floor, scattering its contents in every direction, while the two men totter backward and cling to each other to keep their balance. At the same moment the voices of MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. CAMPBELL make themselves heard without in vague cries of astonishment, question, and apprehension, mounting into a wild shriek as the drawer crashes to the floor.

III

MRS. ROBERTS, without: "O Edward, *is* it a burglar?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, without: "Is it a mouse, Willis?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Ring for the district telegraph—call for a policeman, Edward! Press the ratchet down three times!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't *kill* him, Willis; don't you *dare* to kill him. Take him up with the tongs and fling him out of the window!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Don't trust him, Edward: get Willis to hold him, and press the ratchet quick!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Keep him from getting back into his hole, for then you never can tell whether he's there or not!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why don't you answer, Edward? Oh dear, perhaps he's garotted Edward. I *know* he has!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis, if this is any of your tricks—if it's one of your miserable practical jokes—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I wonder what they're keeping so quiet for! Edward, are you safe? Do you need *me?* If you do, just speak, and I will—go for a policeman myself!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "If you don't answer, Willis—" Whimpering: "Oh, he just wants to make me take my life in my hand! He wouldn't like anything better." The two men, during this rapid colloquy, remain silently aghast, staring at each other and at the scene of confusion around them.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, then, do it, Amy! You have so much more courage than I have, and you have no children; and if you'll only go to the door and peep in, I'll stay here, and keep screaming as loud as ever I can. I'll begin now—"

ROBERTS: "No, no; don't call out, Agnes. It's all right. We've just had a little accident with one of the bureau drawers. It's perfectly safe; but don't come in till we—" He dashes madly about the room, trying to put it in shape. Both ladies instantly show themselves at the door.

MRS. ROBERTS, in dismay at the spectacle: "Why, what in the world has happened, Edward?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It's something Willis has put him up to. I knew it was from the way he kept so still. Where is he?"

CAMPBELL, coming boldly forward out of ROBERTS'S dressing-room, where he had previously taken refuge: "I've saved ROBERTS'S life. If it hadn't been for me he couldn't have moved hand or foot. He was dead asleep when I came here, and I've been helping him look for his dress-suit." At these words MRS. ROBERTS abandons herself to despair in one of the chairs overflowing with clothes. "Hello! What's the matter with Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I never can look any one in the face again! To think of my doing such a thing when I've always prided myself on being so thoughtful, and remembering things so perfectly! And here I've

been reproaching Edward and poor Willis the whole evening for not coming to that horrid musicale, and accusing them of all kinds of things, and all the time I knew I 'd forgotten something and couldn't think what it was! Oh dear! I shall simply never forgive myself! But it was all because I wanted him to look so nice in it, and I got it pressed while he was away, and I folded it up in the tissue-paper myself, and took the greatest care of it; and then to have it turn out the way it has!"

CAMPBELL: "What in the world are you talking about?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, Edward's dress-suit, of course!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course she is. But you always have to have things put in words of one syllable for you."

CAMPBELL: "No irrelevant insults, Mrs. Campbell, if you please! Now, Agnes, try to collect yourself. When you had folded his dress-suit in tissue-paper so nicely, what did you do with it?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, I wrapped it in my white Chuddah shawl, and put it away back on the top shelf in his closet, and I forgot to tell him where it was." Visible sensation on all sides. "And if Edward

were to say now that he couldn't forgive me, I should just simply fall down and worship him."

CAMPBELL: "He can forgive you, probably, but he cannot *forget*; we must leave *that* to women. And here we were searching every nook and corner of the house, and every hole and cranny, for that dress-suit, which you'd poked away in tissue-paper and Chuddah, while you were enjoying yourself at Mrs. Miller's."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "We weren't enjoying ourselves. It was the deadliest thing that ever was, and you were very lucky to escape."

CAMPBELL: "That is all very well; but the credit of that belongs entirely to a merciful Providence. What I want to know is how Agnes is going to excuse herself for hiding her husband's clothes, so that if this musicale had been the most delightful affair of the season he would have missed it just the same."

MRS. ROBERTS, regarding her husband's strange figure in the youthful waistcoat and trousers: "Why, Edward, dear, what in the world have you got on?"

CAMPBELL: "She doesn't even remember the dress-suit in which poor Roberts first

met her! Well, Agnes, you're a pretty wife and mother! Look at that man!" He takes ROBERTS by the elbow and turns him round. "Did you ever see devotion like that? He's buttoned in so tight that he can't draw a full breath to save him, but he would have gone to the party if he had expired to slow music after he got there; only he couldn't find the coat. You'd given that away."

MRS. CAMPBELL, fishing up a garment from the tempestuous sea of clothes: "Why, here's a dress-coat, now!"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, that's Merrick's. It was rather snug for Roberts."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And here's another!"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, that's Baker's. It was rather roomy for Roberts."

MRS. ROBERTS: "But how did you get them?"

CAMPBELL, lightly: "Oh, we sent and borrowed them."

ROBERTS, less lightly: "We had to do *something*, Agnes. I knew you would be terribly anxious if I didn't come—"

MRS. ROBERTS, with abject contrition: "Oh, don't speak a word, you poor suffering martyr!"

CAMPBELL: "We should have borrowed

every coat in the block if you hadn't got back."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, and I've no doubt you'd have taken a perfectly fiendish enjoyment in every failure."

CAMPBELL, with a wild, spluttering laugh: "Well, the disappointments certainly had their compensations. Roberts, just let them see how well you look in Merrick's coat! Or, no: try Baker's first; I think Baker's is a little more swell on you, if anything."

BELLA, at the door: "Supper is served, Mrs. Roberts."

CAMPBELL: "Supper?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes! Mrs. Miller never gives you anything but ice-cream; and I thought we should all need something hot when we got back, and so I had a few— But I forgot all about the supper!"

CAMPBELL: "I'm glad Bella didn't. Better let Bella put Roberts's clothes away after this."

MRS. ROBERTS, in extreme dejection: "Yes, I think I really had, Willis. I'm not fit to be Edward's wife if I behave that way to him."

CAMPBELL: "Well, well, he must have a divorce, then; but not till after supper."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, never mind now,

Agnes. It's all turned out well as it is: Edward has been spared a fearful bore, and nobody will ever be any the wiser about your putting away his evening-dress—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, indeed! *Won't* they? When Baker and Merrick meet at the club, and exchange notes about Agnes locking up Roberts's clothes—"

MRS. ROBERTS, with horror: "Edward! You didn't send that word to them!"

ROBERTS: 'Why—why—I'm afraid we did something like it, my dear. We had to explain our request somehow—"

MRS. ROBERTS, relaxing into a chair: "Then I simply never can hold up my head again." She lets it fall in typical despair.

MRS. CAMPBELL, pressing the annunciator with the energy of a lioness at bay: "I don't believe it's as bad as that. It simply can't be. It would be too abominable." As BELLA appears in answer to the bell: "Did you tell the gentlemen, when you went to borrow the coats for Mr. Roberts, that Mrs. Roberts had locked up his dress-suit?"

BELLA: "Why, that's what Mr. Campbell said to say, ma'am, but I didn't believe Mrs. Roberts would quite like it, ma'am, and so I said—" She hesitates, and MRS.

ROBERTS springs to her feet, with arms outstretched to her.

MRS. ROBERTS: "*What*, Bella?"

BELLA: "Why, you know, ma'am, I couldn't help thinking how things fly about a house like this."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, yes!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Go on!"

BELLA: "I didn't believe the gentlemen would have sent word like that themselves, if they 'd thought of it; and so—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "And so?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "So?"

BELLA: "I know you like to have me always speak the truth, and so I do, to you, ma'am, and every lady I ever lived with; but I wasn't going to have that young waitress of Mrs. Baker's and that nasty cook of Mrs. Merrick's laughing at us."

CAMPBELL: "Well, and what did you do?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, Bella!"

BELLA: "I told Mrs. Merrick's cook that the gentlemen were getting up some charades; and I told Mr. Baker's second girl that the tailor hadn't sent Mr. Roberts's coat home."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, you *were* inspired, Bella."

MRS. ROBERTS, to BELLA: "Oh, you—angel!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, that isn't quite what they call the father of them. Who was the father of what? But we won't dispute about terms. The great thing now is to get at that little supper. Come on, Roberts!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, Edward, take out Amy—"

ROBERTS, putting himself in evidence: "But don't you see, my dear, I can't draw a full breath now; and if I were to eat anything—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, well, go and change them at once. We won't wait for you, dear, but I 'll see to keeping it hot for you."

CAMPBELL, as he follows the ladies out of one door, while ROBERTS vanishes into his dressing-room through the other: "Yes, just slip on anything that will fit you. It 's so near morning now that we won't insist on evening-dress."

ROOM FORTY-FIVE

SCENE: A room in the Summertop Hotel. A chambermaid is discovered putting the last touches to the bed which she has made up in an alcove. A stout gentleman appears at the door and looks in.

I

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN AND THE CHAMBERMAID

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN: "Putting anybody in here to-night, Mary? I'm just going to turn in below, and I've been out with some friends, and I guess I'm pretty tired. You all know how I am when I m sleeping light; and I'm going to sleep *hard* to-night. I'm afraid I should make it lively for anybody over me."

THE CHAMBERMAID: "Oh, that's all right, sor. There ain't annybody in by the

last train but a gentleman and his wife, and the clerk's put *them* into No. 10. I'm just gettin' the room ready for a party that's comin' to-morrow morning for the day."

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN: "Well, forewarned is forearmed. I thought I ought to tell you."

THE CHAMBERMAID: "All right, sor. Slape as harred as ye pl'ase. Ye won't harrum annyone here." After a final glance round the room: "Don't you worry, sor."

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN, going out: "No. I always leave that to *them*. Well, good night, Mary."

THE CHAMBERMAID: "Good night, sor." She follows him out.

II

MR. AND MRS. JULIAN TRENMORE AND THE NIGHT CLERK

MRS. TRENMORE: "Yes, this will do nicely. I don't see why you didn't put us here at once." She looks about the room which the night clerk has shown her into, and sinks down upon a sofa with a deep sigh of satisfaction. MR. JULIAN TRENMORE, her husband, draws a fainter sigh of

relief, and puts down on the table in the centre of the room his dress-suit case, and a bundle of shawls and umbrellas; he finally takes off his hat and places it beside them. THE NIGHT CLERK, who has stood near the door, burdened with a valise, two smaller handbags, a variety of wraps, a parasol, and a kodak camera, until MRS. TRENMORE shall have expressed her content with the room, now begins to place these things on the floor, and is about to retreat when her voice arrests him. "May I *ask* why you didn't put us here at once?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Put you here?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Yes, put us here; give us this room in the first place, instead of the room you did give us? I should really like to know."

THE NIGHT CLERK: "The other room was only one flight up, and—"

MRS. TRENMORE, with vehemence: "Right over the kitchen, where they were washing up the last dishes and singing and talking and clashing the crockery and knives! And if we kept the windows shut the heat was suffocating, and if we opened them we simply *died* of the smell of stale bread and warm dishwater. You heard us *say* that we had come for a quiet night, and a breath

of pure air, and that we wanted a cool room away from all the noises—"

MR. TRENMORE, with spirit that does not seem constant in him: "You heard me say so when I registered."

MRS. TRENMORE: "And yet you put us in that wretched place, where we began to swelter and stifle from the first instant, and the clatter gave me a headache that I shall not get over for a week."

MR. TRENMORE: "You said that No. 10 was the only room you had left."

MRS. TRENMORE: "And here, only one flight further up, was this delicious place, absolutely empty, and as cool and quiet as the grave; with windows opening on a garden, and every breath of air thick with the syringas, or honeysuckles, or whatever they are. Now, *why* didn't you do it in the first place?" She has risen to verify her praises of the room by examining it in every part; she flings back the curtain of an alcove, and discloses a snowy bed. "Oh, I could sleep for *ages* in that bed!" Then she advances suddenly upon THE NIGHT CLERK, who retires before her demand. "I should simply like to know *why* you didn't. Is it the rule of the house to keep people out of a good room if you can possibly find a bad one for

them? Do you take a *pleasure* in thwarting and harassing people? When people come and tell you that they are sick with the noise and heat of New York, and that they have run out for a few nights simply to save their lives, and you see them fairly dropping dead before you, do you *like* to give them a room where a salamander couldn't breathe and an adder would be stunned?"

MR. TRENMORE: "You heard me say so when I registered, and you told me that No. 10 was the only—"

MRS. TRENMORE, passing swiftly from the plaintive note of self-pitying appeal to the tone of withering irony: "Or do you merely prefer to wait up till the porter and call-boys have gone to bed, and then move the people yourself into something decent, when they have got perfectly desperate, and won't stand it any longer? I should like to know what your motive really is. I should like to know whether you have been following a rule of the house, or whether there is some mystery about it all that you can't explain, or whether you simply did not care to tell the truth. And after what you have made us suffer, I think I have a *right* to know."

MR. TRENMORE: "Yes! Why didn't you show us this room at once?"

THE NIGHT CLERK, backing into the doorway, and making good his retreat as he speaks: "I—I—forgot this room."

III

MR. AND MRS. TRENMORE

MRS. TRENMORE, with contemptuous incredulity: "*Forgot!* Forgot, indeed! This is insulting, simply insulting. He never forgot it in the world, and now to have the impudence— He was keeping it for somebody whom he couldn't impose upon with such a wretched hole as No. 10! He saw that he could put off anything upon *you*! They always do. You never browbeat them or bully them, and so I always have to submit to any sort of— Oh, I wish *I* was a man, and had to do the registering! I don't think— Forgot this room! Call him back, Julian! I won't stand it. I can't. If he thinks that I am going to put up with any such paltry subterfuge— I'll call him myself." She plunges towards the electric button in the wall, but before she can get her finger upon it her husband intercepts her and restrains her in a coaxing embrace.

MR. TRENMORE: "No, no, my dear! Let

it go till morning and have it out with him then. We 've got the room we want, and the best room in the house, and we haven't lost so very much time, after all. You didn't let the grass grow under your feet in No. 10: we 're well out of it, and you 've punished that poor fellow enough. Leave him to his little mystery, or his hotel convention, or his plain lie, for the night, and make him suffer a little more in the morning."

MRS. TRENMORE: "But he won't be on duty in the morning; we can't see him again till to-morrow night, and—"

MR. TRENMORE: "Then we 'll wait till to-morrow night, and see him. But remember, now, that we came out for a rest, and not for a fight, though I believe you 'd rather fight than rest any time, you 're such a little bundle of pluck."

MRS. TRENMORE, half persuaded and with a touch of fondness: "Oh, if *you* had more pluck, dearest, *I* needn't have so *much.* You 're always so mild and patient, and that makes me furious."

MR. TRENMORE: "I know it does, and I assure you I appreciate it. But—"

MRS. TRENMORE, more and more softened: "It was for your sake that I wanted

to do it. When I thought how worn out with the heat you were, and how you hadn't been sleeping for days and weeks almost, and then thought of the cruelty of that wretch in putting us into No. 10, when all the time he had this beautiful, big, cool, quiet room standing vacant, and perfectly idle, I—"

MR. TRENMORE: "I understand, and I'm very grateful, but now I'm very sleepy, and—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "I'm not. I never was so wide awake in my life. I could sit up all night, just to enjoy the quietness and sweetness. I do believe it's rested me more to give that creature a piece of my mind than sleeping a month would." She goes to the window and looks out, while he drops into a chair. "Oh, this lovely garden! And this divine silence! How do you suppose we didn't see the garden from No. 10? Or was that wretch keeping *it* a secret, too, along with this room? They don't often have a garden, even in a summer hotel. There was one in that hotel at Plattsburgh, don't you remember? But the locomotives at the station under the hill seemed to be scampering up and down the garden paths the whole night. And here

it's so still! You can almost hear yourself think. Dearest, if you can't sleep here, I don't know where you *can* sleep. Just come and see this garden, and smell it." She turns her face over her shoulder at him.

MR. TRENMORE, yawning: "In the morning, my dear. We'll take the night clerk out among the roses and rub his nose into the pinks till he gives the true reason for putting us into No. 10. But now I'd rather go to bed."

MRS. TRENMORE, returning to him: "You *are* sleepy! That's because you kept your temper. If you'd been as mad as I was— But I'm not angry, now, a bit. I'm simply bewildered. What *can* the mystery be? There must be some mystery! That fellow never forgot this room in the world. There must be something uncanny about it. Do you suppose it's haunted. Perhaps somebody's committed suicide in it! Do you suppose there's a back fence that will have cats on it later?"

MR. TRENMORE: "They'll have to get up early if they're going to be much later." He looks at his watch. "It's nearly one o'clock."

MRS. TRENMORE, going to the window

and looking out again: "I can't see any back fence." She leans further over the window sill and peers down. "We seem to be in a kind of wing, or L, here. We 're off from the main building, and there 's a room just under us, but the ground floor is an open verandah. I never heard of cats coming on verandahs, and I don't believe that there can be anything to disturb us. It 's as still as still can be, now, anyway. That perfume"—she inhales it vigorously—"is from a honeysuckle that perfectly walls in one side of the verandah; you ought to see it in the moonlight; it looks as if it had been snowed on, it 's so full of blossoms." While she talks, MR. TRENMORE drowses in his chair, and his head drops on his breast. "No, there 's not the least danger of cats; I 'm satisfied of *that*. Perhaps cat-*birds*; but *they* don't caterwaul, do they?" She looks round, and sees her husband asleep. "Poor Julian! I don't see how he can be sleepy, such a lovely night as this, in this exquisite room, and with this delicious garden underneath, and this silence, that fairly sings in my ears. Not a sound, anywhere! The last train must be in, and the station is a mile from here, anyhow, and every one of those kitchen girls has giggled

herself off to bed; there isn't a cat; and—" She starts, and listens; she puts her head out and then draws it in and listens again. "Julian, what's *that*?"

TRENMORE, staggering to his feet: "What's what?" He makes some vague passes through the air and tries to rouse himself.

MRS. TRENMORE, listening: "That sound. Don't you hear it? No, there it's stopped! Did you make it?"

TRENMORE: "Make what?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "The sound." Laughing, "Of course you did! You had just dropped off, and you were sno— Hark! There it is again! Then it *wasn't* you! Now it's stopped again. No, there it goes! I knew I couldn't be mistaken, and it can't be you, now." A low hissing noise, coming and going regularly, like the first respirations of a locomotive in starting, makes itself heard. "Don't you hear it?"

TRENMORE: "Yes, certainly I hear it. It's nothing but the engineer trying the steam in his boilers; they have to keep the steam going all night in these hotels. The boilers are in the basement, and it's coming up outside."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Why, of course!

Well, it does take you to think things out, Julian! Do you suppose he'll keep doing it long?"

TRENMORE: "I don't believe so—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "There! He's stopped again, already. Now, he's beginning again." She listens. "But he can't be going to keep it up long, and we mustn't mind it. *I'm* sleepy, too, and— He seems to be putting on coal now! Doesn't that sound like putting on coal?" A stertorous, broken noise is heard, and the hissing ceases. "Such queer lumps of sound! I believe I prefer the hissing. It's stopped. It's all over. Now, my dear, it's high time that— Oh, what *is* he doing?"

TRENMORE, listening: "Sawing kindling-wood, I should say." Listening again: "That's it! But I don't see why he should be *planing* it. And the plane seems to catch in knots, and—" He goes to the window and puts out his head. "Everything's quiet outside. I thought they might be chopping ice under the window. I've been in hotels where they do it all night; but—"

MRS. TRENMORE, tragically: "It isn't coming in through the window. It's coming up through the floor!"

TRENMORE: "Through the floor?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Yes, don't you hear it?"

TRENMORE: "Oh, that's merely the register, bringing the sound from the cellar."

MRS. TRENMORE: "But there *is* no register. I tell you it's in the room under this. Don't you hear it?"

TRENMORE, listening carefully: "It does seem to be coming through the floor."

MRS. TRENMORE, sternly: "What are they doing?"

TRENMORE, listening and reporting with analytical conscientiousness: "Well, they seem to be letting off steam. And—putting on coal. And—sawing kindling. And—planing it. And—catching the plane in knots. And—chopping ice. And—now, they're emptying out potatoes on the floor. And—making hooks and hunks of noise. And—choking, and catching their breath, and—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "They're killing somebody! I tell you they are; and we shall both be subpœnaed and cross-examined, and I don't know *what* all. Go down and—There, it's stopped again; it's all perfectly silent; they're every one of them dead!" The noises slowly renew themselves in all

their strange variety. "There! They're beginning to struggle again. O Julian, if you have any love for me at all, you will go— No, I can't let you! They will murder you too. But call—call that wretched night clerk, and make *him* go. I'll ring—" She whirls away to press the bell button, but he catches her by the wrist, and pulls her over towards the floor with him where he stoops listening.

TRENMORE: "It isn't murder— It's something much worse— It's— Don't you hear? Listen!" She stoops and listens with him; then she lifts herself and faces him.

MRS. TRENMORE: "You don't mean to tell me that it's some one—*snoring*?" He nods solemnly. "Julian, I can't believe it! That any human being is making those horrible sheets and spurts, and chips, and shavings, and lumps, and hooks, and bounces of noise in his *sleep*?" He nods as before. "Well, then, I can tell you it's nothing of the kind. It's not snoring; it's murder! It's—" She listens again, stooping lower with her ear toward the floor, and then facing him with awful calm: "I do believe it is—what you say. And now, what are you going to do about it?"

TRENMORE, in a ghostly whisper: "I don't see what we can do exactly. I suppose we shall have to wait till he stops."

MRS. TRENMORE: "And suppose he doesn't stop? Suppose he *never* stops?" TRENMORE shrugs. "Don't tell me you're not going to do anything! That you're going to submit—that you're going to lie down passively under the worst snoring that there ever was! Then *I'm* not! We shan't get a wink of sleep the whole night. It's an outrage, and I won't endure it! I'm going to ring for that—" She makes another dash at the bell button, and he intercepts her again; the noises continue in their complexity. "Let me go, Julian! *Now* I understand why he was so loath to give us this room, and I shall let him know what we think of his putting us—"

TRENMORE: "We don't want to make a scene, my dear. We don't want to be ridiculous. Let us think whether we can't do something ourselves to stop it." They both stand silent and motionless, trying to think; the noises continue as before. "If there was only a register we might call down through it."

MRS. TRENMORE: "But there *is* no register. I told you there was no register

in the beginning. Indeed, if there was a register, don't you suppose I would bang on it till he was *glad* to stop? Go down and knock on his door!"

TRENMORE: "Do you think that would do? I'm afraid it might rouse the house. I might go to the wrong door—the noise seems to come from everywhere, now, and what—what—"

MRS. TRENMORE, impatiently: "Well what?"

TRENMORE: "What if it was a lady?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Nonsense! No woman in the world could make such a noise as that. I tell you it's a man, and you're perfectly safe."

TRENMORE, dubiously: "I don't know about the safety. If it's a woman it would be scandalous, and if it's a man it might be dangerous. He might come to the door to ask what I wanted, and then what could I say? You can't tell a man that he's been snoring, and you've waked him. And if it was a woman came to the door—I've heard them on the sleeping-cars sometimes, and if it *should* happen to be a woman—think of the talk! No, my dear, it won't do."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Then we must thump on the floor!"

TRENMORE: "Thump on the floor? Oh, I don't know. That's rather serious. I rather think we'll have to have patience. He can't keep it up *all* night; he must wake himself by and by. Let's wait a while longer. I don't believe we've any right to thump on the floor."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Right or wrong, I'm going to do it. Has *he* any right to keep on making noises that raise the roof and shake the whole house, and we not lift a hand against it? Give me those umbrellas!" She makes a dash for the umbrellas on the table, but he interposes.

TRENMORE: "But if it *should* be a woman—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Oh, I wish it *was* a woman. Horrid thing! Will you let me have those umbrellas, Julian, or do you wish me to go home to mamma? What a shame to treat your own wife so! You care more for some horrible, vulgar, common creature, that destroys the peace and comfort of a whole hotel with her puffing and—" She slips round behind him, and seizes the umbrellas. "There! Now, I'll see if I can't do something to stop her making a perfect hippopotamus of herself."

TRENMORE: "But I don't say she *is* a woman, my dear!"

MRS. TRENMORE: "No matter. I don't care whether she's a woman or a man. If I can only find the place right over his head, I shall thump so that she'll be glad to—" She goes about listening at different points in the room, and trying to locate the noises, bending over, and putting her ear to the floor; he follows her, adapting himself to her movements in vain entreaty of posture and gesture.

TRENMORE: "Don't do it, my dear; don't do it! Consider the uproar it's going to make! We shall have people running in from all over the house asking what's the matter. It isn't *done*, my love! It *can't* be done. We're in a public house, and we have no right to make a noise and wake everybody up. They can arrest us, I believe. Don't, darling! Do have a little patience. He'll soon wake, I know he will!"

MRS. TRENMORE, unheeding: "The sound seems to be everywhere. Oh, how cruel, Julian, to leave it all to me!" She rises and glares reproachfully at him. "Help me to find the place right over the dreadful thing's head. She ought to be ashamed!"

TRENMORE: "But if she's a man, he'll make an awful row at being waked. Very likely he'll come up here and—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Oh, I should just like to *have* her." She goes about as before, stooping and listening. "I believe I've got the place now." She stoops lower and listens. "Yes, this is it. He's right under it, and no thanks to *you*, Julian. And now I shall thump—"

TRENMORE: "But, consider, my dear!"

MRS. TRENMORE, desperately: "I shall *not* consider. I have a right to save my own life; and— Will you lift the rug, here, Julian, or must I do everything? Oh, very well then; I'll lift it."

TRENMORE, reluctantly lifting the rug: "I'll do it, my dear; but—but—thump softly."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Thump softly! *Snore* softly!" She raises the umbrella and brings the point down with all her force. "There! I think that she'll hear that, unless she's dead, and I know she isn't dead." She batters furiously with the umbrella, which goes to pieces in her hands. "Give me another umbrella, Julian."

TRENMORE: "But hadn't you better wait and see, my dear, if he won't—"

MRS. TRENMORE, snatching the other umbrella from the table, and returning to her work: "It hasn't made the slightest impression on her." She beats and thumps on the floor till the second umbrella gives way; she flings the fragments from her. "Oh, if I only had a poker!" She glares around the room. "But of course in a summer hotel, like this, there 's no fireplace and no poker nearer than the kitchen. Why didn't you think to bring your cane?"

TRENMORE, soothingly: "It wouldn't have done any good, my dear. If umbrellas won't wake him, canes—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Then give me my parasol!"

TRENMORE: "But your parasol couldn't bear it a moment!"

MRS. TRENMORE, seizing it: "No matter. *I* can't either. There!" She despatches the parasol with a single blow, flings the fragments from her, and turns to her husband: "Bring your dress-suit case! It 's good and hard, and—"

TRENMORE: "But, my dear! I don't want to thump the floor with my dress-suit case. I—"

MRS. TRENMORE, with frenzy: "You want me to do it? Very well, then, I

will." She reaches for the dress-suit case, but he puts it behind him.

TRENMORE: "There! I'll do it. Where is the place? You've ruined the floor!"

MRS. TRENMORE: "No matter about the floor. Thump!" TRENMORE blindly obeys. "Now, that is something *like* thumping. If that won't wake her, nothing will. And if you had thought of your dress-suit case in the first place, I needn't have destroyed our two umbrellas and my Paris parasol. But no! *I* have to think of everything. Thump with the corner!" After half a dozen blows with the corner of the case, it springs open, and the dress suit, with a shirt, collars, cuffs, ties, and handkerchiefs, flies out over the floor. "That comes of your not locking it! But never mind the things, now. I never wanted you to bring them, and I told you so; but you always will, even if you don't expect to meet a soul you know. Thump!" She sinks panting into a chair.

TRENMORE, erecting himself and standing with the open empty case in his hand, listening: "No. He's stopped."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Listen! I do believe we have stopped her. I knew we could do it. Oh, we have! What a rest! How deliciously silent! O Julian, I never can

be grateful enough to you." He looks round at his scattered garments. "I'll pick them up for you, as soon as I can get my breath."

TRENMORE: "I wish you'd get *my* breath, too, while you're at it." He sinks panting into a chair. "And look at my dress-suit case!" He gazes ruefully down at the ruin.

MRS. TRENMORE: "Don't mind it, dearest. I'll get you a new one for your birthday. I've been saving up the money I've got from you, and I didn't know what I *should* get you, and now it's a perfect inspiration. Oh, how quiet it is! Doesn't it seem too good to be true, dearest? Now, won't you always trust my judgment after this, a little? I know that I'm impetuous at times, and I do take the whip hand and the bit in my teeth, now and then, but only when it's absolutely necessary. Better put down the window, dear. We're both overheated, and we ought to keep out of the draught till we cool off. Oh, *what* a rest! I really had begun to despair; and it *has* cost us something. Your umbrella is ruined, and so is mine; and my parasol is a *perfect* wreck; and I suppose the floor—But if it's a man we can make *him* pay for the floor, can't we? Or we can just pull back

the rug over it. No? Well, I know how sensitive you are about such things, and I merely suggested it; I 'm sure *I* don't want to do anything wrong about it, if you don't. Oh, I'm so *happy*! I 'm not the least sleepy any more; I feel as if I could stay up all night and enjoy the quiet more and more, every minute. Oh, how still it is! Can't you fairly *hear* the stillness?" TRENMORE lifts his head and stands in a listening attitude. "What is it?"

TRENMORE: "Nothing. I—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "You what?"

TRENMORE: "Nothing. But I — didn't you—*hear* something?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "Only the singing of the silence in my ears."

TRENMORE: "Yes, it must be that. But —didn't it begin that way before?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "*It?* O Julian, you don't—"

TRENMORE: "No, no! It 's stopped. It was the si—" A low, hissing noise makes itself heard. It deepens, and passes into the effect of escaping steam. It becomes like the respiration of a locomotive in starting. It changes into the sound of stoking an engine. It changes again into the sound of sawing wood, of planing knotty lumber,

of chopping ice, of pouring out potatoes, and ends in lumps and hooks and bounces of sound. TRENMORE turns a ghastly face upon his wife; she hides her face in her hands and bursts into tears. "I suppose he merely turned over and got a new grip."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Oh dear, oh dear! What shall we do now, Julian?"

TRENMORE: "Shall I thump again?"

MRS. TRENMORE: "It wouldn't be any use. She'd just turn over again and get *another* new grip. Oh, I *know* it's a woman, now, and she's doing it to spite us because we woke her. I shall die; yes, I shall die! Oh, who could have dreamt of such an awful thing? Did you ever hear anything like it before? Now *say* if you did?" She stretches her hands piteously towards him.

TRENMORE: "Never! not even on a sleeping-car, and I've listened to a whole car-load of drummers before now." Suddenly: "But I'm not going to stand it!" He dashes his empty dress-suit case wildly to the floor, and jumps up and down on the bare space, while she weeps silently. "I'm getting a little mad myself now." The noises below continue unaffected by his activities, and he flies at the electric bell

button. "I'm going to have that scoundrelly clerk up! I am going to know why he put two unoffending strangers into the loft of a boiler factory. I am going to make him send the proprietor. I am going to have the police. I am going to rouse the house. I am going to raise the roof." He strides furiously up and down, kicking the broken umbrellas and shirts and collars out of his way. He stops abruptly and invokes the unconscious sleeper beneath. "Oh, blow away, you old grampus! Your time is short! Get in your work; let off your steam, put on your coal, saw your kindling, plane your boards, chop your ice, pour out your potatoes, make your hooks and hunks!"

MRS. TRENMORE, clasping her hands in admiration: "Oh, dearest, you *are* mad, aren't you? How sweet it is of you! But, Julian, couldn't you—I know it's against your principles, and you never have; but just for my sake—swear?"

IV

THE NIGHT CLERK; MR. AND MRS. TRENMORE

THE NIGHT CLERK, tapping on the door jamb, and extending a pitcher through the open doorway: "Ice-water?"

TRENMORE: "Ice what?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Water. You rang three times."

TRENMORE: "Did I? Then I meant to ring three *hundred* times. What did you mean by putting us in here?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "You didn't like No. 10, and I changed you to the only room we had. Ain't you comfortable?"

TRENMORE: "Comf—! Do you hear that? Don't pretend you *don't* hear it! I won't stand it!" He seizes the CLERK by the arm and pulls him over, so as to bring his head close to the floor. "*Now* do you hear it?"

THE NIGHT CLERK, rising, as TRENMORE releases him: "If you say so. Yes, sir, I think I did hear a noise of some kind."

TRENMORE: "Oh, you did! And what do you think it is?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Well, sir, it 's no use trying to disguise it, I suppose. It 's the gentleman in Room 45, right under you here. That 's the way he always does."

TRENMORE, choking with rage: "And you put us in here, over a man that *always* does like that? Now, see here! You just go down to Room 45, and wake that man up, and tell him—"

MRS. TRENMORE: "I knew it *couldn't* be a *woman*. No woman could be so lost to shame."

TRENMORE, harshly: "Never mind about that now." To the CLERK: "You go down—"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Oh, I couldn't do that. I wouldn't have the right to call up any guest that way."

TRENMORE: "No right to call up a porpoise—"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "No, sir. Not if he was a guest. And especially No. 45. You see it 's like this. He 's here for the summer, and he told us fair and square, when he came, that he had this—habit; and we arranged to put him off here in the L, with nobody under him, and only this one room over him—you must have noticed that we came here through a sort of gallery; and he 's really hired the whole wing, as you may say—"

TRENMORE: "And you mean to tell me that we're *trespassing* on a locomotive, wood-sawing, ice-chopping, potato-pouring stoker like that?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "No, sir, not exactly; we can use this room at our own risk, and we do use it under certain conditions, when there 's no other vacant. You

see, there isn't much danger, if we can get a transient in here, and get him asleep before No. 45 comes in. Then the transient sleeps through, and No. 45 doesn't disturb him. But sometimes we do get stuck. Now, to-night, for instance, when I put you in here, I supposed 45 was out, and wouldn't be in for an hour, and that would give you plenty of time to get in ahead of him, but he must have stolen a march on me. I don't blame you for being mad; I should be just so myself, but it wasn't my fault. I did the best I could, and I had to take the chances with you." He listens and adds, sociably: "He's in great form, to-night, ain't he? Whole band, as you may say. Notice how he gets in that trombone tremolo every now and then? It's grand—in its way, I mean." The CLERK sits down and listens with an air of critical appreciation. "Oh, he's an orchestra, and no mistake! *I* never heard anything like it. Whole Wagner opera, ain't he?" He appeals for sympathy to MRS. TRENMORE, but failing, addresses himself to TRENMORE. "Well, sir, you won't hardly believe it, but there ain't anything I like better, when the house is all settled down, than to take my cigar and get into a good easy-chair on the verandah under him,

and just *listen*. No danger of my dropping off to sleep and missing a bell! No, sir. *He* looks after that. It 's the variety that does it—that keeps you interested." He listens: "There 's a kind of a *vox humana* stop that he gets in, now and then, after he 's been dining pretty well, that beats everything. I wish he would just try it once so you could hear it." He listens: "No, that ain't it; that 's his æolian harp attachment. Some nights I 've heard him do a symphony; kind of soft and low, to begin with, like the wind in the leaves, and shepherds dancing; then drums in the distance, and cannon firing; then the tramp of soldiers, and army wagons creaking and horses neighing; then musket-firing along the whole line, and peasants running off and women crying. That usually wakes him up, and he turns over for a fresh start. He listens: "I don't know as I ever heard him get in more style than he is doing to-night. Kind of a diapason, ain't it? Notice those high notes? And that bass? Oh, it 's rich! He must have been out with the boys, somewhere, to-night. What a *swing* he 's got to him! Like the wedding march in 'Lohengrin,' ain't it? There! By George, he 's stopped, and I thought he was just coming

to that passage in the Intermezzo; I was keeping it for a kind of surprise for you. He *is* such an undependable fellow, though. Never twice alike. He's so quiet you'd think he was dead now, wouldn't you?" He listens with a rapt air.

TRENMORE, grimly: "Do you suppose he *is* dead? That he's stopped for good?"

THE NIGHT CLERK, shaking his head: "I wouldn't like to trust him. He may begin in another minute, or he may take a rest—like when the orchestra goes out for beer, you know—and you won't hear from him for a quarter of an hour, may be. But he's uncertain."

TRENMORE: "And what do you propose to do with us?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Well, sir, I'm sorry, but there isn't anything else except No. 10. I guess that's all quiet now; in fact, I know it is; and I've had it airing—"

TRENMORE: "Oh, then you expected we should have to go back, did you?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Not exactly. But I thought, in case anything happened— If he gets in his work first, they generally want to move."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Well, it's a wicked imposition, and I'm not going to stand it.

I 'm going to stay here. Does he never stop for good?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "He does sometimes; or as good as for good. He wakes himself up so that he can't sleep, and then he turns out and smokes a cigar, and that gives you a chance to drop off. He *may* have done it now. You can never tell; and if he *has* happened to have got up and started in for a smoke, why, you may drop off, you know, and make out a splendid night's rest yet. Guess you 're so tired he wouldn 't wake you, if you hurried. But, as I say, it 's all a chance."

MRS. TRENMORE: "Then we will take the chance, Julian. I am not going to be driven back to that noisy, pantry-smelling— Oh, he 's beginning again!" She sinks into her chair with a desolate wail, and hides her face in her hands.

THE NIGHT CLERK, sadly, while the noises successively make themselves heard in all their variety: "I was afraid of it. You see, if he 's been dining more than usual, he can't quite wake himself; he makes a strike for it, and that gives you the idea that he *has* done it. But—" He shakes his head compassionately. "I can understand just how the lady feels, and I 'm sorry—"

V

MRS. TRENMORE

MRS. TRENMORE, springing to her feet, and confronting him: "Then *do* something! Julian, go with him, and see if it's quiet in No. 10, and see if it's cool; and if it is—No, don't take your things! You can come back for them, if it's all right, and then I can come." TRENMORE and THE NIGHT CLERK fly at her command, and she remains alone amid the sounds from below. At first she is absorbed in the interest of her husband's quest; then she becomes aware of the sounds. "Oh yes, keep on, you heartless, shameless thing! Puff away, you cruel wretch! I wonder what you look like, anyway! I should just like to see what sort of fiend in human shape you really are! Keep on, do!" She stamps on the bare floor above the sleeper's head, while he steadily works away from locomotive fizzing to wood-sawing, ice-chopping, and potato-rolling. "Some great, disgusting, bulbous, blubbery thing, with cheeks hanging down, and a red fat neck, and pudgy hands—oh, *I* know what you look like! And I hate you, hate you, hate you! If you had a spark of humanity, or the least remorse, or any

gallantry at all, you'd *stop*. But you just take a pleasure in driving a helpless woman from her room, great oaf!" She begins to gather up the broken umbrellas and to put TRENMORE'S things back into his dress-suit case, whimpering: "You 've made me break our two silk paragon-frame umbrellas, that cost five dollars apiece, and my parasol that I brought from Paris; but much *you* care, you big, ugly—*I* don't know what! And Julian's dress-suit case is perfectly ruined, and we shall have to pay for the floor over your head, you hideous monster. Oh, rumble and puff and whistle away! If you had any self-respect— But I don't care what you do now. I'm going to get away from you, and you can't spoil my rest any more. I just like to listen to you and despise you; I take a pleasure in it; and I hope you 'll go on snorting and wheezing to your heart's content. It doesn't matter to me, now; I'm safe. Keep on, and show how gross and vulgar you are! I just like to laugh at you. Ha, ha, ha! I only wish you knew I was listening to you. Oh, go on; go on! I shall leave you now and wait outside; you can have the place to yourself." She goes out, and instantly returns. "But don't suppose I'm going to leave you

sweetly sleeping." She takes up the water-pitcher, and smashes it on the floor. "There! I guess that will make you turn over." She goes and returns again, to follow the pitcher with the bowl. "And that, too." She goes out, and returns to break a chair on the place. "See how you like that, for a change." She drags the washstand from the wall and bumps it up and down. "And that, and that, and that! Oh, it hasn't troubled him a bit! I surely shall go mad, if this keeps on! Yes—Julian, Julian! Come back and save me! Where *are* you, Ju—"

VI

TRENMORE; THE NIGHT CLERK; MRS. TRENMORE

TRENMORE, returning with THE NIGHT CLERK: "It 's all right, my dear. No. 10 is as cool as a cucumber and as sweet as a pink."

MRS. TRENMORE, frantically: "Oh, I don't care *what* it is! If they were washing all the dishes in the world under it, and it was as hot and stuffy and smelly as—as—the pantry of a steamer, I 'd go. Only take me out of this! My spirit is broken." She

falls upon his shoulder and he slowly trails her from the room, while THE NIGHT CLERK gathers up their baggage and prepares to follow them, with a cursory glance at the wreckage.

VI

THE NIGHT CLERK AND THE STOUT GENTLEMAN

THE NIGHT CLERK: "She got in some good work, but she couldn't disturb *him*. Oh, he's a bird! Hullo!" THE STOUT GENTLEMAN appears at the door in a varied deshabille of pajama jacket and black trousers; he wears a silk hat.

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN: "What's been going on here?"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Going on? Oh, nothing! Did you hear anything?"

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN: "I heard a cat-fight, or a cyclone!"

THE NIGHT CLERK: "Ha, ha, ha! Oh no; oh no! You must have been dreaming. Sorry you waked yourself up."

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN: "I haven't been to sleep yet. But now, look here! I've been out with some friends to-night,

and you know how I am. Better not put anybody in here. I should make it lively for them."

THE CLERK, following him to the door: "Oh, I shan't put anybody in here. Don't be afraid of *that*! And I hope you won't hear any more cyclones or cat-fights—ah, ha, ha! Good-night, good-night, sir!"

A
PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT

I

MRS. FREDERICK WINTON AND MR. LEONARD CAMP

MRS. WINTON: "I shall have to begin somehow, Mr. Camp, and I can't begin worse, I suppose, than by saying that Philippa is peculiar."

MR. CAMP: "It isn't at all a bad beginning, Mrs. Winton. I should have had no criticism to offer even if you had begun by saying she was unique." He smiles and she laughs a little. They are sitting in the parlour of MRS. WINTON'S cottage on the southern Long Island shore: she with the air of having just come down to meet him, and he with the effect of not having so freshly arrived but that he has had time to accumulate most of the books on the table near which he sits in the vain effort to

amuse the impatience of waiting; they lie in a straggling heap next his elbow, some half open. He has one glove off: with the gloved hand he rests his straw hat upon his knee.

MRS. WINTON: "Ah, I shouldn't have gone so far as that; and I'm quite ashamed to have kept you so long; but—we had a little controversy as to whether I should be allowed to see you at all, or not. Philippa insisted that it was altogether her own affair, and she ought to see you first."

MR. CAMP: "I hardly know what to say. Between the joy of seeing Miss Winton, and the desolation of not seeing you—"

MRS. WINTON, laughing: "Of course it's difficult, and I won't make you go on. But I felt that I ought to come, for it might be now or never—"

MR. CAMP: "*Oh*, Mrs. Winton!"

MRS. WINTON: "I don't mean it's so bad as that—unless *you* choose."

MR. CAMP: "*I* choose!"

MRS. WINTON: "I certainly shouldn't have allowed you to be got down here, and then driven off again by any act of ours."

CAMP: "Oh, *Mrs.* Winton!"

MRS. WINTON: "Spare your raptures; or, rather, postpone them, till you know

whether you can really indulge them. Philippa says that before she can consent to anything like an engagement, she must tell you something."

CAMP: "What *is* it, Mrs. Winton?"

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, *that* would be telling. And although she has seen at last that it is proper for me to come and—and prepare you, so far as you can *be* prepared, she insists absolutely upon telling you herself. And she's all the more determined because it's an ordeal."

CAMP: "For me?"

MRS. WINTON: "For her—she *thinks*." She laughs.

CAMP, musingly: "Oh, for both, then." He preserves a thoughtful silence for a moment. "Miss Winton has rather a fondness for—ordeals?"

MRS. WINTON, with candour: "No, no. I can't say that she has—exactly. But when it comes to a question of duty— But why do you ask *me*? *You* know what Philippa is!"

CAMP, sighing: "She is an angel. But sometimes I doubt if I know just what *kind* of angel."

MRS. WINTON: "Yes, there are angels and angels, I suppose."

CAMP: "Do you think we ought to be afraid of angels, Mrs. Winton?"

MRS. WINTON: "Not if we are good, I think."

CAMP: "Well, sometimes I'm afraid I'm afraid of Philippa. Does that mean that I'm not good? Of course I know I'm not good enough *for her.*"

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, in this case it's just the other way, I believe. She thinks she may not be good enough for you."

CAMP: "Now you *do* alarm me. Who is to judge?"

MRS. WINTON: "You are!"

CAMP: "I? Does she say that? Then there is no hope! It must be something desperately bad, if I'm fit to judge of it. Is it something desperately bad, Mrs. Winton?"

MRS. WINTON: "Well, *I* shouldn't think so." She checks herself in a laugh.

CAMP: "Oh, why stop laughing? It gives me new life! Now I shall have to get on with the old—what there is of it. Mrs. Winton, what *is* it that Philippa wishes to tell me?" He edges forward on his chair in his eagerness.

MRS. WINTON, falling back in hers: "Why, it's merely that— No, no! I

mustn't tell you. I promised her. How can you ask me?"

CAMP: "I don't ask you to tell me what it is. I meant merely to ask you what it was *like*."

MRS. WINTON: "And I can't tell you that, either."

CAMP: "Did you promise her that too?"

MRS. WINTON: "I promised that I would not even approach the subject."

CAMP: "Oh!" After a moment: "And how were you expecting to prepare me? It seems to me that you are taking the very course to unprepare me, if I understand such things."

MRS. WINTON: "I don't see how you can say that. I think I have been very reassuring."

CAMP: "How?"

MRS. WINTON: "By my manner."

CAMP: "What has your manner been?"

MRS. WINTON: "Light, cheerful, gay, almost frivolous."

CAMP, with a sigh: "That's true. But it's always that."

MRS. WINTON: "Mr. Camp!"

CAMP: "Oh! I mean you're always so good. And you think I ought to take courage from your manner?"

MRS. WINTON: "I mustn't say that. It would be treachery to Philippa. There! I can hear her walking impatiently to and fro overhead!" They both listen. "Can't you?"

CAMP: "That silken sweeping! That swift, soft footing like a caged—"

MRS. WINTON: "Yes—"

CAMP: "But isn't this a kind of eavesdropping? Ought we to overhear the play of Philippa's emotions, as expressed in her circumambulations?"

MRS. WINTON: "No; we ought *not*. You're quite right! It is a kind of eavesdropping." She rises.

CAMP, springing to his feet: "Oh, don't leave me, Mrs. Winton! I feel dreadfully unprepared. I—I feel—yes, I feel unaneled. Do you know what aneling is?"

MRS. WINTON: "I haven't the least notion, except that it's something Shakespearian. I must go—"

CAMP: "One word! One little monosyllabic vocable! I think I've been a pretty average sort of man, Mrs. Winton. But a fellow doesn't live till thirty without getting *some* dust on his youthful bloom. Girls are so strange, nowadays;

and Philippa is so—unique; and if she should ask me—"

MRS. WINTON, fondly: "You poor man! She isn't going to *ask* you anything! She's going to *tell* you something."

CAMP: "Oh! Do you think that will be any better?"

MRS. WINTON: "That I can't say. 'Sh! I hear her stopping! She's stopping at the door!"

CAMP: "Do you think she's coming down?"

MRS. WINTON, listening: "No; she's walked away again! What do you wish to say more, Mr. Camp?"

CAMP: "Oh yes! I wish to say— But do resume your light, cheerful, gay, almost frivolous manner, or I shall have no courage at all!"

MRS. WINTON, laughing: "Well, there!"

CAMP: "Well—where was I?"

MRS. WINTON: "I'm sure I don't know *where* you were."

CAMP: "Do you know where *you* were?"

MRS. WINTON: "No! 'Sh! But I know where Philippa is! She's just slammed to her dressing-table drawer, and that means she's put some finishing-touch on, and she's not going to wait any longer! 'Sh! She's

crossing the room—she's at the door. Don't try to keep me, Mr. Camp! You mustn't! Why, are you crazy? If Philippa found me here— There she is on the stairs!" She releases the hand to which CAMP is clinging, and flashes into the next room through the sliding-doors, which with one motion she opens and shuts, as Philippa reaches the bottom of the stairs, and enters the parlour.

II

PHILIPPA; CAMP

PHILIPPA: "I wish to tell you before we go one word further, Mr. Camp—"

CAMP: "Even before we say good morning?"

PHILIPPA: "Good morning, if you insist. It's a decency, and I suppose it doesn't matter that it's now afternoon—"

CAMP: "It's before dinner."

PHILIPPA: "Yes—it's that." She is a dark girl, with a thin, impassioned face, and an intense look in her starry eyes, which have a strange remoteness of glance, as if their rays might be some minutes in traversing space before reaching the object they fall upon. She is so tall, that her

eyes are nearly on a level with MR. CAMP'S blonde hair; but then, MR. CAMP is not very tall, and he stands a little inclined towards her in the tentative and provisional attitude he has taken at her entrance. "Will you sit down?"

CAMP: "Can we shake hands after we sit down?"

PHILIPPA: "I don't wish to shake hands —yet."

CAMP: "But we don't meet as enemies?"

PHILIPPA: "We meet as — neutrals.' She takes the chair lately occupied by her aunt. With a faint sigh, and a slight shrug, CAMP resumes his own. There is a moment's silence, while PHILIPPA fingers the arm of her chair, and with an effort governs the tremor of her hand. "Mr. Camp, I wish to tell you that I have been engaged before." Her tone is thick with emotion, but she holds her voice firm.

CAMP, making a joyful start toward her: "Before? Then you mean that now—"

PHILIPPA: "Wait, please. Let—let me go on. Don't misunderstand me. I mean —nothing but what I say. I would have told you this sooner—I would have told you at the beginning, if I had imagined— But it has all been so unexpected!"

CAMP: "Not to me, Philippa! I expected it the first moment I saw you. In fact, I knew it."

PHILIPPA: "That makes it so much the worse for me. I ought to have known it; I can only say that I didn't; and that's saying nothing. Your letter—your offer—was a perfect surprise; but as soon as it came I was resolved that you should know everything. I would have come—don't interrupt me, please—I would have come to tell you; that would have been the right way; but they wouldn't let me; and I was forced to send for you here. I have made you travel a long distance—"

CAMP: "It was only a few hours; and they 'd a parlour-car on!"

PHILIPPA: "No matter! It was wrong. And now you have the full right to reject me—"

CAMP: "Reject you? Philippa, if you 'll let me follow you round on my knees the rest of my life—"

PHILIPPA: "I mean—I was going to say—after you 've heard all."

CAMP: "All? Is there any more? You 've told me you were engaged before—"

PHILIPPA: "I was wrong to say that; it implied that I thought myself engaged now."

CAMP: "I wish you did! I shouldn't care for your being engaged before. Only be engaged now, Philippa, and—"

PHILIPPA: "You don't know all yet, and I can't let you say anything until you do. And I can't let you call me Philippa."

CAMP: "Miss Winton, then. I take back the Philippa."

PHILIPPA: "You are very good—you are like *him* in that. We were very young when we met—I was only seventeen. I don't tell you to excuse myself. But life had just begun for me, and I found my world in him. My world? My heaven! He had no tie to this earth except in me—I dragged him down as low as such a spirit could descend. If I am good in anything, he made me so."

CAMP: "I think you may have had a hand in it too. A little hand!" He looks at hers.

PHILIPPA, ignoring him: "We were engaged, and we were to have been married, although I was so young—he was only six years older himself—as soon as he got a parish—"

CAMP: "He was—excuse me; I don't want to seem intrusive—a clergyman, then?"

PHILIPPA: "Yes." A silence follows, unbroken by her.

CAMP: "Well, if that is all— But of course!" After a moment: "And you said— You wished to say something more?"

PHILIPPA: "Yes—everything. I broke off the engagement—I tired of him."

CAMP: "Oh!"

PHILIPPA: "I was too light for any serious love—"

CAMP: "I don't think that follows, necessarily. Do you mean that he bored you?"

PHILIPPA, tragically: "I tired of him. Yes, *say* bored. The time came when he bored me. But if I had been true, and high, and worthy, he would never have bored me. I saw that afterwards. Distinctly."

CAMP: "Do you mean that you—wanted to have it on again?"

PHILIPPA: "Oh, never! If I had, I could have forgiven myself. But the relief was too great, too disgraceful, too wicked. You had better know the worst of me. It was a perfect joy to have him out of the country."

CAMP: "He went away?"

PHILIPPA: "To India. He is a missionary there."

CAMP, subduing a laugh into a respectful smile: "Well, I don't pretend to be very superhuman; and I confess that if he had been where we were likely ever to meet him —and the world's so small!—I would just as soon it had not happened. I suppose a man likes to be the first, though I really don't know why; but if the other fel—the other one—is so far off, why, it's practically the same as if I *were* the first."

PHILIPPA: "Do you really think so?"

CAMP: "Yes, I'm quite sure of it."

PHILIPPA: "But if you were to meet him—"

CAMP: "Then it would be a little—creepy."

PHILIPPA: "I am glad to hear you say that. I couldn't have l—honoured you if you hadn't." She hesitates.

CAMP: "And was that all?"

PHILIPPA: "Yes—all." She sighs. He makes a movement towards her. "No!"

CAMP, restraining himself: "But if that's all, and I don't mind it in the least, why in Heaven's name aren't we engaged, Philippa?"

PHILIPPA, looking steadily at him: "Because—because—if I could tire of him, if

I am so fickle and variable as that, I'm not sure that I'm worthy of you."

CAMP: "Oh, let me be judge of that!"

PHILIPPA: "I'm not so generous as you—so wide-minded. If *you* had told *me* such a thing, I don't believe I could have cared nothing for it."

CAMP: "Oh!"

PHILIPPA: "No, not even if I loved you."

CAMP: "Even if you loved me! Don't you love me, Philippa?"

PHILIPPA: "How should I know?"

CAMP: "Well, if you shouldn't, who should? Do you feel no peculiar emotion towards me? If you wish a diagnosis!"

PHILIPPA: "I think you are charming—"

CAMP: "Philippa!"

PHILIPPA: "Yes, from the very first I felt a strange fascination in your presence. I feel it now!" He starts towards her. "Don't touch me!—I think—*think*—I love you. Wait! But I want to think it *over*. Just now I'm—blinded. You seem very good—I hope you're not too good for me! I'm going down to the sea-shore to think it all over."

CAMP: "I hoped you had thought it over, Philippa, by this time."

PHILIPPA: "I mean you're not minding. I haven't had time to think that over yet. I wish to see it in every light."

CAMP: "May I go, too, and help you?"

PHILIPPA: "Are you going to stay for dinner?"

CAMP: "They haven't asked me yet. But I dare say they will, if all goes well."

PHILIPPA: "Will you wait till I come back?"

CAMP: "If you won't let me come to meet you?"

PHILIPPA: "You can come to meet me."

CAMP: "When—how soon?"

PHILIPPA: "By and by. That is if I make up my mind. If I want you, I'll put my handkerchief on the point of my parasol, and wave it. You'll see it over the bank."

CAMP: "Well."

PHILIPPA, after a pause: "We may never see each other again. Should you like to— Do you think me a very strange girl, Mr. Camp?"

CAMP: "Bless me, no! Like all of them! Only in a different way."

PHILIPPA: "Then—we may not meet again."

CAMP: "Oh, don't say that! Not, if you put your handkerchief on your parasol."

PHILIPPA: "In that case, yes. But if I don't—if I think it 's best not to—"

CAMP, eagerly: "Yes!"

PHILIPPA: "I shouldn't wish you to think I didn't care for you—"

CAMP: "O Philippa!"

PHILIPPA: "Because I wasn't sure I ought—that it was right—"

CAMP: "Oh!"

PHILIPPA: "But I want you to believe that I do care for you, and I 'm only anxious to find out how and why—in this new light; and if I couldn't find out, I should be very, very sorry for you; sorrier even than I was for myself; and I thought—And—and should you—should you like to kiss me before I go?"

CAMP, with a burst of honesty: "Philippa, I don't know! I thought I would have given the world to kiss you. But now—"

PHILIPPA: "Will you let me kiss *you*?"

CAMP: "Oh, if it comes to that!"

PHILIPPA: "Good-bye, then — perhaps for ever."

CAMP: "Oh *no*!"

PHILIPPA: "It might be better so—for

both of us." She goes up to him, and puts a hand on either of his shoulders. His arms hang at his sides. She looks earnestly into his eyes, and then she kisses him, and he remains standing so after she has left the room.

III

MRS. WINTON ; MR. CAMP

MRS. WINTON, flashing the sliding-doors apart: "Congratu—"

CAMP: "Good heavens, Mrs. Winton! Have you been—"

MRS. WINTON: "Not an instant! I've been sitting most conscientiously beyond ear-shot, and almost perishing of my own virtue. I've just this moment come in from the very farthest end of the verandah. What's the matter? Isn't it settled?"

CAMP: "Not in the least."

MRS. WINTON: "But didn't I hear—the only thing I *did* hear?"

CAMP: "You heard a kiss."

MRS. WINTON: "And doesn't *that* settle it?"

CAMP: "Not always."

MRS. WINTON: "But if you kissed her—"

CAMP: "I didn't kiss her. She kissed me—more shame to me!"

MRS. WINTON: "Oh! Is it such a disgrace?"

CAMP: "I shouldn't have thought so—once. But now—"

MRS. WINTON: "The weight of such questions used to be with women; but now they seem to be with men. Could you be a little less mysterious, Mr. Camp?"

CAMP: "It would be difficult. Mrs. Winton, it seems to me that I've had a look into Philippa's soul."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, indeed! And what was it like?"

CAMP: "Heaven."

MRS. WINTON: "And is that what makes you so dreary—not to say, paralytic? Suppose we sit down!"

CAMP, sinking into his chair again: "Yes; it was rather overawing. Earth is gayer." He sighs. "The trouble with me is, so far as I can make out, that I didn't have a glimpse of Philippa's soul on the same level. I had to look up. It's given me a moral crick in the neck."

MRS. WINTON: "Now you're beginning to be yourself again."

CAMP: "That's comparatively easy. The

difficulty is to be somebody else: and that's what I fancy Philippa has a right to, in my case."

MRS. WINTON: "Why, you *are* a little dislocated! Won't you try to let me help you?"

CAMP: "There isn't anything to tell—if that's what you're after."

MRS. WINTON: "I couldn't admit it for worlds!"

CAMP: "She seemed to wish me to know that she had once been engaged to a—"

MRS. WINTON: "Yes, I supposed it was that. Why, she was a mere child at the time! But of course it flattered her vanity; and she did take it very seriously—for a while."

CAMP: "She broke it off because she got tired of him."

MRS. WINTON: "Did she tell you that? Yes, she got tired of him, that is the plain truth. But I must say he was a man of very high ideals. He had a beautiful nature; he was noble."

CAMP, leaning forward in pathetic entreaty: "Was he so very, *very* noble, Mrs. Winton?"

MRS. WINTON, laughing against her fan:

"Yes, his nobleness was of the deepest dye. But he wasn't the least amusing."

CAMP: "You think I have a melancholy advantage of him, there?"

MRS. WINTON: "Yes. He made you feel that there could not be such a thing as joking in heaven."

CAMP: "Thank you, Mrs. Winton. You don't think you're flattering me?"

MRS. WINTON, with a cry of laughter: "Not at all! You are exactly what Philippa needs; and if she doesn't— But what did you say when she told you of her engagement?"

CAMP: "That it didn't make any difference to me."

MRS. WINTON: "Surely she didn't complain of that?"

CAMP: "No. But it seemed to make a difference to *her*. She complained of *that*. She accused me of being too good for her, and she said she must go down to the beach and think it over. She asked if you had asked me to stay to dinner—"

MRS. WINTON: "I have—now!"

CAMP: "But she seemed to think it was just as well you hadn't; for she intimated that she might not get back from the beach before I was gone. And she bade me a

provisional farewell. I wanted to go down to the beach with her, and help her think; but she said she would put her handkerchief on the point of her parasol and wave it over the bank if she needed assistance—Good heavens! She may be needing it, she may be waving it, now!" He rushes to the window, while MRS. WINTON falls back in her chair in shrieks of laughter, and he stares long and earnestly towards the sea. "No. It's only a four-masted schooner in the offing; not a handkerchief at all! And then she asked if she might—kiss me. I don't know how I ever came to allow it."

MRS. WINTON: "Ah, ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha! Really I shall die."

CAMP, ruefully: "Mrs. Winton, what do you suppose she did it for?"

MRS. WINTON, wiping the tears from her eyes: "For the usual reason—if it's a reason. Such things used to go by favour, I believe."

CAMP: "I can't flatter myself of it, in this case; I'm afraid Philippa is peculiar."

MRS. WINTON: "Why, that's what I said in the first place. You assented, but I could see you didn't believe me."

CAMP: "One must sometimes give people

the benefit of a reasonable doubt. I didn't believe she was *so* peculiar, then."

MRS. WINTON: "And I don't believe she is, now."

CAMP: "What do you mean?"

MRS. WINTON: "I mean that Philippa is a girl, like all the rest of them."

CAMP: "That's exactly what I said myself."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, that's why you don't believe it. But it's true, all the same."

CAMP: "Well, I'll admit she's a girl, but not like the rest of them. What do you think she meant? Don't you really think she knew her own mind, and just—"

MRS. WINTON: "How should a girl know her own mind?"

CAMP: "That's true!"

MRS. WINTON: "They're brought up not to know their own minds. It is supposed to be pretty, and refined, and delicate. Tell me, now; should you respect Philippa so much if you thought she had known her own mind when you asked her to marry you?"

CAMP: "I don't know—"

MRS. WINTON: "There, you see!"

CAMP: "But Philippa being what she

is, what should you do if you were in my place? What should you do now?"

MRS. WINTON: "I shouldn't let her wave her handkerchief a great while unseen."

CAMP: "Oh, do you think—" He rushes frantically to the window, and peers out. After a moment, with a deep sigh: "No; it's still the four-masted schooner."

MRS. WINTON: "Nothing else in sight?"

CAMP: "Nothing but Winton. He's coming up the road towards the gate."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, that's nice. He'll be so glad to see you."

CAMP: "Will he? It's awfully good of him. Still—do you know, Mrs. Winton?—I don't feel exactly like meeting company."

MRS. WINTON: "So glad you don't make a stranger of *me*, Mr. Camp."

CAMP: "Oh, you're different. Winton's a man, don't you know. I can't help feeling that I'm in a very tender and precarious condition, till this affair is decided, and Winton might jar upon me. You understand?"

MRS. WINTON: "I've no doubt Mr. Winton will, when I tell him. I'm not a man, myself."

CAMP: "You're better."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, I know *that*!"

CAMP: "And if you don't mind, I'll just slip out of the side door on to the verandah, here, and fetch a compass round about your shrubbery, and get away without meeting Winton, just now."

MRS. WINTON: "How delightful! Why, it's quite like something improper!"

CAMP: "Yes, isn't it? And it's so perfectly innocent, too. If Winton asks after me, you might say I've just gone down towards the beach to look at the shipping. I want to keep an eye on that four-masted schooner, you know."

MRS. WINTON: "Yes, there's no telling what moment it may turn into a handkerchief on a parasol."

CAMP: "That is my idea. And you really think there's a chance."

MRS. WINTON: "A fighting chance."

CAMP: "Oh, bless you, bless you!" He slips out through the sliding-doors, kissing his hand to her. "One gets into the habit of these things, really. But it's only my *hand*, Mrs. Winton." He pulls the doors to while MRS. WINTON sinks back into her chair in another fit of laughter. While she has her handkerchief to her eyes, WINTON enters in jacket and knickerbockers, with the dust of a long ramble upon him. He

stands looking at her a moment before he speaks.

IV

MRS. WINTON; MR. WINTON

WINTON: "Wasn't that Camp I saw going out of the side gate?"

MRS. WINTON: "Yes, poor fellow; he was in hopes you wouldn't see him."

WINTON: "Poor fellow? Isn't Philippa going to have him?"

MRS. WINTON: "She 's gone down to the beach to find out."

WINTON: "And he 's going to help her look?"

MRS. WINTON: "Not unless he sees her wave her handkerchief on the point of her parasol."

WINTON: "Oh, that 's the arrangement, is it?" He sits down in the chair that CAMP has lately occupied, and stretches his legs out with a groan of fatigue, pushing his hands into his pockets.

MRS. WINTON: "Philippa was sure to have some arrangement, and that 's the one in the present case."

WINTON: "Well, I suppose she has a right to think it over, and to think it over

more than once, if she chooses. I've often felt that if I were to receive an offer of marriage, even after a woman had been courting me the better part of a summer, I should want a good deal of time to think it over. I couldn't decide at once. I should want to view her in the new light of a *fiancée* before I accepted her."

MRS. WINTON: "It seems to be a family trait, the inability to decide upon an offer of marriage."

WINTON: "I should be glad to think I took after Philippa in anything. But really, I don't see how you women ever make up your minds. How did you make up *your* mind, Bessie, for example?"

MRS. WINTON: "I shouldn't call it exactly a mental operation, now. Besides, it was too long ago."

WINTON: "It was a good while. But it rather freshens up those associations to have something of the kind going on in the house. Is Camp very much annoyed by the suspense?"

MRS. WINTON: "Not annoyed, I should say, so much as awed—he thinks he is awed. You had better know all about it, Frederick. It 's been very peculiar."

WINTON: "Ah, Philippa is peculiar.

Was that what you had been crying about when I came in?"

MRS. WINTON: "It's what I'd been laughing about." She begins laughing again, and continues to laugh.

WINTON: "It seems to have been *very* like Philippa."

MRS. WINTON: "It was more like her than anything that's happened yet. It's Philippa gone farther."

WINTON: "I didn't know Philippa could go any farther. But I should like to hear how. Only, if it's practicable, I wish you wouldn't make light of her, or rather of *it*. After all, Philippa is—Philippa."

MRS. WINTON: "I will try to spare you. I didn't understand why she wanted to have him down here, for I thought she could make up her mind about him just as well at a distance; but as soon as he appeared, I found out. She wished to tell him of her former engagement, and then, as nearly as I could make out, let him take her or leave her."

WINTON: "Ah, don't put it in that way!"

MRS. WINTON: "That's the way it was, and that's the way I must put it. I pleaded with her not to be so foolish; I told her

that it couldn't possibly make any difference to him; that it would be extremely awkward, and might be offensive; that she could tell him after they were engaged; but nothing would do but she must tell him now. She wouldn't even let me tell him, and put it in the right light. The most she would let me do was to go down and prepare him for it, after we had kept him waiting fifteen minutes; and she wouldn't let me say more than that there was something she wished to tell him."

WINTON: "That was hard on you, Bessie. Did you keep your word?"

MRS. WINTON: "Of course I kept my word. I am not a man. He entered into the spirit of it at once, and was in the right mood, at least, for her revelation. He wasn't afraid because she was going to tell him something, but he thought she might be going to ask him something."

WINTON: "That might have been more embarrassing?"

MRS. WINTON: "But I reassured him on that point, and, as a matter of fact, she didn't ask him anything whatever. She simply told him about her engagement, and he told her, of course, that it didn't make the slightest difference. But it seems that

didn't satisfy her, and she insisted that she must go away and think it over. He naturally wished to go with her, but she forbade him, and said that if she wanted him she would wave her handkerchief on the point of her p-p-parasol." MRS. WINTON breaks down laughing. "And—then—then—when he consented to that, she offered in view of their not—not meeting again, and as a slight token of her regret, to—to—k-k-k-iss him, and she did actually kiss him!" She hides her face in her handkerchief, and bows herself forward in a paroxysm of laughter.

WINTON: "Were you by?"

MRS. WINTON: "By? No! Of course not! I was by as far as hearing the kiss was concerned, for I was just coming back to them when it—happened."

WINTON, after a moment of frowning silence: "Sometimes I think Philippa is a fool."

MRS. WINTON, recovering herself, with seriousness: "*I* don't think she's a fool. I think she knows very well what she's about."

WINTON: "What do you mean?"

MRS. WINTON: "It would be no use to say. You wouldn't understand, and you're so silly about the girl that you would take

it the wrong way. You never can understand that women can't go about things as men do, and you think if they use a little finesse with themselves, they are doing something criminal and false."

WINTON: "What do you mean by using finesse with themselves?"

MRS. WINTON: "I said you wouldn't understand." She follows him with laughing eyes, still wet with tears, as he rises and walks up and down the room. "Women not only have to hoodwink men; they have to hoodwink themselves too. A girl—such a girl as Philippa—enjoys putting herself through her paces before a man; she likes to exploit her emotions, and see how he takes it; though she may not know it!"

WINTON: "I believe women think worse of women than men do."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, that may be."

WINTON: "But in this case your subtlety has deceived you. I would stake my life that Philippa meant no more by what she did than pity for the man. He happens to be a pretty decent fellow—as men go. If he were like the carrion some men are, I think I should go after him and—bury him." He stops before his wife, and looks down furiously into her face.

MRS. WINTON: "Don't bury *me*, my dear!"

WINTON: "Don't laugh, then! It's a shame to laugh."

MRS. WINTON: "At such a fool as Philippa? Really, you're all alike, you men! Mr. Camp wouldn't let me laugh, either, at first. Why shouldn't women be all alike too? At any rate, whatever Philippa fancies, I hope you can see that she's committed."

WINTON: "How committed?"

MRS. WINTON: "Young ladies don't go about kissing young men without giving them a well-founded expectation that they are going to marry them, and if I were Mr. Camp I should not wait for a handkerchief on the point of a parasol. I should go down to the beach, and do a little of the thinking myself."

WINTON: "Camp won't."

MRS. WINTON: "No; he is peculiar too. There is a pair of them. I shouldn't have thought it of him. Outside of my own family, no one has made me feel so much like a reprobate. He wasn't so abrupt as you are, my dear, but he was quite as severe in his way. Really, it makes one wish to talk the matter over with a human being or two."

WINTON: "Did you ask Camp to stay to dinner?"

MRS. WINTON: "Provisionally, I did. Everything has to be done provisionally in this house, till Philippa has thought it over. If she comes to an unfavourable conclusion, I don't suppose Mr. Camp would wish to stay."

WINTON: "I suppose not. I must go up and take a little of the dust off. Why, Philippa!" He starts back from the door, which he was about to lay his hand upon, when it opens, and PHILIPPA enters from the hall.

V

PHILIPPA; MRS. WINTON; WINTON

PHILIPPA, to her uncle: "Mr. Camp—where is he?"

WINTON: "I haven't seen him, Philippa—"

MRS. WINTON: "How long did you expect him to wait. He's gone—"

PHILIPPA, with a start, turning to her aunt: "Gone?"

MRS. WINTON: "Ah, I see you would have been sorry! He's gone to look after

a four-masted schooner that he saw in the offing. He hadn't the courage to look after a handkerchief on the point of a parasol."

PHILIPPA: "I knew you would make him tell you. Well, I don't care!" In proof of her indifference the tears come into her eyes, and her chin trembles. She controls herself in turning again to her uncle: "I don't know whether I have done exactly right, Uncle Fred. Aunt Elizabeth, might I see Uncle Frederick alone? I wish to ask him something."

MRS. WINTON: "By all means! I seem to be turned out of the room on *all* occasions. You won't mind my listening at the keyhole?" She looks back laughing from the door, before she disappears.

VI

PHILIPPA; WINTON

PHILIPPA, with the severity of looking at her aunt still in her eyes: "Why does she think it is such a laughing matter?"

WINTON: "I rather think she regards *you* as the laughing matter, Philippa."

PHILIPPA: "Do *you*?"

WINTON: "No; we're of the same family, Philippa, and that's more than being of the same sex, as far as understanding each other goes."

PHILIPPA: "Ah, if it were only you, Uncle Fred, that I had to talk with!" After a moment's pause: "Uncle Fred, what sort of man is Mr. Camp!"

WINTON: "Bless my soul! How should I know? He's what you see, I suppose: he's amiable,—and kind,—and amusing. I think he's an uncommonly clever fellow. He's sure to get on. He works hard at his lawing. Every one likes him, I believe; at any rate, I never heard any one say a word against him."

PHILIPPA: "Yes, but what is he, *really*? What is his life?"

WINTON: "His life? Who knows what another man's life is? I shrink from knowing my own!"

PHILIPPA: "And ought a girl to marry a man whose life she doesn't know, and make it *her* life, as she must if she truly loves him?"

WINTON: "No, my child, I don't think she ought. But, as a general thing, I should say she had to. She's no worse off than he is, though."

PHILIPPA: "Yes she is, if she has told him everything, and he has told her nothing."

WINTON: "Ah, in that case, yes."

PHILIPPA, with tears: "Uncle, why are you so cold, so hard with me? You say you understand me: do you blame me for anything?"

WINTON: "Well, no, not blame; that isn't the word. But you're very impulsive, Philippa, and impulse—is always liable to misinterpretation."

PHILIPPA: "I know what you mean; Aunt Bessie has been telling you, and laughing at me. But it was not an impulse; it was a decision."

WINTON: "Oh! Now I believe I *don't* understand."

PHILIPPA: "No, in this case it isn't sufficient to be of the same family. But my mother, if she were alive, would understand, and she wouldn't keep me from opening my heart to her."

WINTON: "Open your heart to me, Philippa! I shall listen with all the sympathy in the world. You know that I have always encouraged you to think for yourself and act for yourself. I don't believe in the Chinese foot-binding of women, physically or psychically. I like

your notions, and I will stand by you. Now go on and tell me whatever you wish."

PHILIPPA: "No, I can't, now. The time is past. I shall have to think for myself, and act for myself."

WINTON: "And you're sure you're not cold and hard with *me*, now?"

PHILIPPA: "No, no, Uncle Fred. But you understand how a thing can be possible one instant, and impossible the next. You can understand that, can't you?"

WINTON: "I can understand how it can be so with you, Philippa. It may be queer, what you do; but it won't be wrong. Act for yourself, and if you need any standing-by, let me do it for you."

PHILIPPA, a little absently, a little ruefully, as she goes out: "Thank you, Uncle Fred." WINTON remains looking anxiously after her, and then begins walking meditatively up and down. A tap at the sliding-doors arrests him. They open, and MRS. WINTON peers in.

VII

MRS. WINTON; WINTON

MRS. WINTON: "Merely to say that Mr. Camp is coming up the road toward

the house. Oh, you're alone!" She comes in and shuts the door behind her. "Well?"

WINTON, briefly: "She says it was a decision, and not an impulse."

MRS. WINTON: "Her fond farewell?"

WINTON: "Yes—or fond *au revoir*. I suppose she meant that. It wasn't put into words."

MRS. WINTON: "I thought so, from the beginning. A girl is always a girl, even when she 's a Philippa."

WINTON: "What do you mean?"

MRS. WINTON: "You will see. But I'll go on duty now, and relieve you. I'll see Mr. Camp."

WINTON: "Not at all. I'm going to see Camp, myself. I want to talk with him."

MRS. WINTON: "Well, you mustn't. He doesn't want to see *you*. He went away to avoid seeing you. He said he was in a very tender condition, and if you jarred upon him it might be fatal."

WINTON: "I guess Camp will have to take the risk. I'm in a very tender condition myself, and I'm in danger too, and I'll have to risk it. But I don't believe we shall hurt each other, and I believe we shall help Philippa."

MRS. WINTON: "Are you going to give her away?"

WINTON: "Give her away?"

MRS. WINTON: "Give him a hint—tell him it was a decision?"

WINTON: "Certainly not. I'm not sure that it was a decision—in that sense of the term. She meant that it was deliberate."

MRS. WINTON: "Stuff!"

WINTON: "As much as you please. But if there's to be any giving away, it's Camp who's got to do it."

MRS. WINTON: "Very well, then, I hope there won't be any throwing away, either. Mr. Camp is one chance in a thousand."

WINTON: "So is Philippa—in a million."

MRS. WINTON: "I hope you'll make him think so. But I wash my hands of it." There is a ring at the door, and MRS. WINTON prepares to make her escape; but she launches a Parthian arrow at her husband over her shoulder as she flies: "And don't flatter yourself that you understand Philippa, or that you are helping her when you are helping her to do what she wants, or that you are even pleasing her. That is all."

VIII

CAMP; WINTON

WINTON, shaking hands with CAMP: "Ah, glad to see you, Camp. I know all about it, and I am not going to jar upon you if I can avoid it."

CAMP: "Then Mrs. Winton—"

WINTON: "—has told me. So has Philippa, for that matter."

CAMP: "And their stories agree?"

WINTON: "Wonderfully, as far as the facts are concerned."

CAMP: "That's a good deal. I wish you could say as much for their opinions. I didn't find Miss Winton on the beach."

WINTON: "No; she had come up here. I fancy, to find you."

CAMP: "Do you mean it?"

WINTON: "Yes; she wishes to see you again."

CAMP: "Oh!" After a moment: "Would you allow yourself to become the sport of reviving hopes for that reason?"

WINTON: "Well, I don't know really. It seems to me that the thing depends very much upon yourself—what you are.

Camp, what are you? What sort of fellow?"

CAMP: "Bless me, how should I know?"

WINTON: "Of course. But are you frank? Are you capable of being frank?"

CAMP: "It's difficult."

WINTON: "But not impossible?"

CAMP: "If there were something to be gained by it—"

WINTON: "Philippa's to be gained by it. And to tell you the truth, I don't believe she's to be gained by anything else. And it must be the real thing."

CAMP: "The real thing? And you don't call that jarring? How far must it go?"

WINTON: "All lengths, I should say. If you were not entirely frank, and she found it out afterwards, I should say it might be unpleasant."

CAMP: "And if she found everything out at once, that might be unpleasant too!"

WINTON: "It's a risk you've got to take, my dear fellow. It's quite worth while, it seems to me. Philippa's worth while."

CAMP, thoughtfully: "Ah, there can't be two minds about that—in me, at least.

Have you any idea what she is going to want me to be frank about?"

WINTON: "I have a general idea, yes."

CAMP: "But you don't feel authorised to impart it?"

WINTON: "I think she would prefer to impart it—that is, she would think it better. And I wish to stand by Philippa. I know she's queer, but I think she's generally right. She's noble, and she's high-minded. I won't say any more; I'm not sure I ought to have said so much. But we all like you, and I couldn't help wishing you luck. The affair is in your own hands. If you don't feel equal to it, why I really think you had better go away."

CAMP: "Go away?"

WINTON: "Yes: what is the use of seeing her again? I could make it right with her—that is, I could account for your going away."

CAMP: "I don't think I shall go away, Mr. Winton."

WINTON: "I hoped you wouldn't; but I thought I would give you the chance. I will send her to you. She wishes to have some serious talk with you."

CAMP: "Oh! At once?"

WINTON: "Why, hadn't you better have it over."

CAMP: "If it were well over, yes. But if one is dead, it is for such a long time! Well!"

WINTON, wringing his hands: "All right, then. Courage—and candour?"

CAMP: "I'll try to have the candour, even if I haven't the courage."

WINTON: "I'm not sure but Philippa would prefer that." He leaves CAMP sunk in a kind of daze, in the chair he has mechanically taken at the corner of the table, his elbow leant upon it, and his head resting on his hand. He starts to his feet at the light approach of PHILIPPA, who glides in at the door which her uncle has left ajar.

IX

PHILIPPA; CAMP

CAMP: "I—I beg your pardon. I—didn't notice you—at first. Perhaps I oughtn't to be here, but—Mr. Winton said there was something you wished to say to me—"

PHILIPPA: "Sit down, Mr. Camp. I

hoped there was something you wished to say to me." She sits down at the corner of the table farthest from him.

CAMP: "About—"

PHILIPPA, gently: "Yourself."

CAMP: "Do you think there 's anything I could say to my advantage?"

PHILIPPA: "You mustn't joke! I 'm very serious."

CAMP: "So am I. If I don't seem so, I assure you it isn't because I don't feel so. Seriously, I will tell you anything you ask."

PHILIPPA: "Must I ask? I hoped, down there by the sea, that if we met again you would have thought there was something you would tell me without asking. Why were you so indifferent when I told you that I had been engaged?"

CAMP: "Why? I suppose I didn't care."

PHILIPPA: "That isn't what I understood when you said a man always liked to be the first. And it doesn't all of it suggest anything?"

CAMP: "Well, I can't say—"

PHILIPPA: "Then I will ask you something. Were you ever in love, before?" He hesitates. "I told you *I* had been!"

CAMP: "Why, of course! One is always

more or less in love. That is, not dangerously, but provisionally, potentially. People take one's fancy; and it 's over in a day—or a week—or a summer. You can't govern your fancy. But it doesn't really mean anything. I suppose there 's a certain amount of flirtation has to go on."

PHILIPPA: "Yes. Should you like to think of my flirting with some one for a day, a week, a summer?"

CAMP: "Well, no. And I can't imagine it. But with a man, you know, that sort of thing is different."

PHILIPPA: "You mean that you flirt with other men?"

CAMP: "No, I didn't mean that, exactly."

PHILIPPA: "Oh, then you flirt with women. Do you respect the women you flirt with?"

CAMP: "It isn't a question of respect. It 's— Well, then, no! One doesn't respect them! But still, I can't think there 's so great harm in it. That is— Yes, it isn't the thing, quite. No, you can't say you respect the woman you flirt with. But it 's even, as far as that goes. She doesn't respect you, either. Why, Philippa—I beg your pardon—"

PHILIPPA: "Oh, call me Philippa. What difference does it make? I can call you Leonard."

CAMP: "Will you?"

PHILIPPA: "Since you say you don't respect the women you flirt with, you can't mind what I do."

CAMP: "Well, I don't see the relation, exactly."

PHILIPPA: "No, not now. And you say they never came to anything, the flirtations?"

CAMP: "No-o-o—except—once. Philippa, I was once engaged before, too. The thing is so perfectly dead and gone, that I can hardly believe in it. She was an abominable flirt."

PHILIPPA: "Is that what she says of you?"

CAMP, reproachfully: "Philippa!" After a moment's reflection: "I don't blame her altogether. I was to blame, too. Yes, I think I was quite as much to blame as she was. These things are not done from one side only. But—I was very much in love with her at last. I'll say that for myself. It's about the only thing I can say."

PHILIPPA, closing her eyes to a fine line,

as if trying to see the affair critically: "The same kind of love that you feel—that you say you feel—for me?"

CAMP: "Well—" He stops, and then with a burst: "I might distinguish, but I was certainly in love with her. It's the only saving grace about it."

PHILIPPA, as before: "But you didn't respect her?"

CAMP: "I loved her. There's no question of anything else in it."

PHILIPPA: "There is with a woman. Do you think she would have liked to know that you loved her without respecting her?"

CAMP: "I don't believe she would have minded." He takes out his handkerchief and mops his forehead. He rises and looks out of the window. Then he comes back, and faces her standing. She remains seated, playing with the leaves of the book half open on the table. There is a silence.

PHILIPPA: "Is she living?"

CAMP: "Yes, she's living."

PHILIPPA: "Where?"

CAMP: "In New York." PHILIPPA remains with downcast eyes, turning the leaves of the book with the fingers of one

hand. "But she's married, and has two or three children. It's all as if it never had been. You need never know her—you wouldn't be likely to meet her—"

PHILIPPA, opening her eyes and looking up at him: "Had you meant to tell me about your engagement?"

CAMP, anxiously: "Yes, certainly—"

PHILIPPA: "When?"

CAMP: "I don't know. I wished to tell you at once—"

PHILIPPA: "Before I told you?"

CAMP: "I thought it would do any time. I didn't see it very seriously. And then, when I found how seriously you looked at it in your own case, I couldn't—at once." With a deep breath: "I think that's the truth of the matter."

PHILIPPA: "After we were engaged, and I couldn't break with you, or when we were married, and I couldn't help myself, you meant to tell me."

CAMP: "Well—" He stops.

PHILIPPA: "And if *I* hadn't told you till then, what would you have thought of me?"

CAMP: "Thought of you?"

PHILIPPA: "Shouldn't you have blamed me?"

CAMP, after a pause, desperately: "Yes; I should have blamed you. But in my own case, I don't believe, honestly, that I thought so far as that. My hopes were not so confident—"

PHILIPPA, looking down again as before: "When I kissed you, I meant to marry you—"

CAMP: "Ah, Philippa!"

PHILIPPA: "I only wanted to go away and think. If you had come after me to the beach—"

CAMP: "I didn't dare, after you forbade me. If I could only have imagined—Surely you don't blame me for that!"

PHILIPPA: "Oh no! I don't blame you for anything." Jumping to her feet, and flinging the book across the room: "That is all, Mr. Camp: you can go, now."

CAMP: "No, now I *can't* go, Miss Winton." He has risen, too.

PHILIPPA: "Then, I will go." She dashes out of the room, but almost immediately returns. "May I ask *why* you can't go, when I wish you to?"

CAMP: "How can I go when you are feeling that you have been unjust to me?"

PHILIPPA: "*I* unjust? *How* unjust?"

CAMP: "I will leave you to say. Or

now, if you like, I will go away without troubling you to say, for I see that you *have* the feeling."

PHILIPPA: "This is trifling."

CAMP: "Do you think I am trifling with you?"

PHILIPPA: "No." After a moment: "But if you were not trifling, you would tell me how you think I have been unjust to you."

CAMP: "No, you know I wouldn't. I couldn't." They stand looking at each other for an appreciable time before PHILIPPA speaks.

PHILIPPA: "The worst thing was your confessing you might not have told me until after we were married."

CAMP: "There's something worse than that. I would have very gladly never told you. I'm not proud of it."

PHILIPPA: "Oh, don't think you can move me by owning the truth!"

CAMP: "I don't. I saw that the truth didn't move you before. But I'm not anxious to move you. I'm not on trial now."

PHILIPPA: "I am not on trial, either. Your accusation doesn't put me on trial."

CAMP: "My accusation?"

PHILIPPA: "I know what you mean. That I had no right to make you speak of yourself. But I had."

CAMP: "Yes—in a certain case."

PHILIPPA: "I should despise myself if I pretended not to know what you mean. You mean that if I didn't intend to forgive you, no matter what you said, I had no right to make you speak. Is that what you mean?" CAMP makes as if to speak, but does not speak. "I know that you could say I had encouraged you, and that when I began to feel myself caring for you, I ought to have tried to find out what sort of a person you were. But how could I do that? Of course you will say that you couldn't tell me at the start—"

CAMP: "I don't know that I shall say that—or anything. My trial's over. I've been condemned and executed."

PHILIPPA: "Who condemned you?"

CAMP: "You told me I might go."

PHILIPPA: "And you didn't go. So it's the same as if you hadn't been condemned." She waits a moment as if for him to answer. "Then if everything is at an end, and you have no more to say, I don't see why we should continue the conversation." She goes out, but comes back at once. "I suppose

you will think that I got you down here to trap you, and humiliate you, and then cast you off."

CAMP: "I might be base enough to think that, but not base enough to think it of you, Philippa."

PHILIPPA: "Oh! And you think that my telling you of my own engagement was simply a ruse to get you to tell me of yours?"

CAMP: "I don't think even that."

PHILIPPA: "You know that I never dreamed of asking you anything about yourself; and I went down to the beach admiring your magnanimity, and all at once it occurred to me that you had some good reason for it. I dare say you blame me for suspecting you, although you were guilty."

CAMP: "I've told you I don't blame you for anything."

PHILIPPA: "It's all very well to say that." She stops, with a dazed air: "I know what makes you despise me. It was my kissing you."

CAMP: "Philippa, will you believe one thing I say? I hold that kiss sacred. It came from your angelic goodness of heart—from your—"

PHILIPPA: "Oh, it's too late, it's too

late! I suppose you think I hurried back to make sure of you, because I had kissed you, when—when the sight of you would be a perpetual reminder of it."

CAMP: "My imagination doesn't rise to such heights as that."

PHILIPPA: "Then what is it you accuse me of?"

CAMP: "Nothing."

PHILIPPA, after a moment: "You—you are very generous."

CAMP: "Ah, even *your* saying that doesn't make me believe it; and I should like very much to go away believing something to my credit. Come, Philippa! I told you the worst I know about my past. I've tried to be honest, and I think I've succeeded pretty well, though it isn't easy for me. I know I've made myself thoroughly detestable in the attempt. I wish you'd say, before I go, that you think I've been honest with you. Will you?"

PHILIPPA: "I think you've been honest."

CAMP: "Thank you. Before I go I wish to ask you something else. Do you think *you've* been honest?"

PHILIPPA: "I?"

CAMP: "Oh, you've been honest enough with *me*—terribly honest. You've told me,

if not just in so many words, that you think I meant to act a base and cowardly part—"

PHILIPPA: "No—"

CAMP: "You've made me feel that you do. And you have made me feel that there must be something very squalid in me if I could flirt with a woman and become engaged to her when I didn't respect her; and I haven't even the poor consolation of thinking that I broke with her. She broke with me, or else I should have married her."

PHILIPPA: "I don't think that is bad."

CAMP: "Ah, now you are beginning to be honest—honest with yourself; and that's what I wished you to be. *I'm* not worth your honesty, but *you* are. And now, tell me! Don't you think that to insist upon our having lived up to each other's ideals before we knew each other would be something a little unreal, a little factitious, a little affect—"

PHILIPPA: "Mr. Camp!"

CAMP: "Oh, I've had glimpses, visions, during this bad quarter of an hour, of possibilities of character—conduct—that I never dreamt of before. I've imagined going through life worthily, because *you* wished it. My ideals have been lower than yours;

I'm ashamed of it, I 'm glad of it, for I like to look up to you. But don't you think that for you to demand that they should have been the same before I had your example, would be something you fancied you ought to do, rather than *felt* you ought to do—would be a bit of pose?"

PHILIPPA: "Pose! Now, *now* I see that you *do* despise me, and that you have all along! But you *know* that I abhor pose more than anything, and that rather—rather than have you believe I was capable of it, I would have you think that I had never cared at all for your—being engaged before!" Then, with a start, realising what she has said: "That is, I don't mean —I mean—I mean—"

CAMP: "I know what you mean, Philippa; and don't be afraid that I shall presume upon what you 've merely said. I 'm going now; I won't trouble you any longer, but I shall always remember just how you looked, standing there by that table, with your head down, and your hand hanging at your side, and I shall wish—I shall wish—I had asked you to let me take your hand!" Without lifting her head, she puts her hand out to him: "Ah! Thank— Philippa— Philippa, may I kiss—your hand?"

PHILIPPA, faintly: "Yes."

CAMP, stooping at her side, and lifting her hand to his lips: "Good-bye, Philippa." He offers to release her hand, but she clings mechanically to his.

PHILIPPA: "I have made you say you were ashamed—"

CAMP: "You 've made me tell the truth."

PHILIPPA: "The worst?"

CAMP: "I can't think of anything worse."

PHILIPPA: "Thank you. I only wished to know the worst. And you 're not going away hating me?"

CAMP: "No; loving you more than ever!"

PHILIPPA, with her face turned to him, and her eyes averted: "Why—what are you—going for?"

CAMP: "Philippa!" He throws his arms about her, and clasps her to him. She suddenly frees herself.

PHILIPPA: "I left my parasol! I left it on the beach. And my handkerchief."

CAMP: "Was it tied on the point of it?"

PHILIPPA: "I tied it on going down."

CAMP: "Oh!" He offers to seize her in his arms again, but she escapes to the door, which she opens.

PHILIPPA, calling up the stairs: "Aunt

Elizabeth! Uncle Fred!" They are heard instantly descending the stairs, and they appear at the door with surprising promptness.

X

MRS. WINTON; WINTON; PHILIPPA; CAMP

MRS. WINTON: "Well, Philippa?"

CAMP: "Oh, nothing, Philippa left her parasol on the beach, and we are going to look for it."

PHILIPPA: "I thought I would tell you that Mr. Camp—Leonard—will stay to dinner."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, I'm so glad—"

CAMP: "Yes, we'll be back before dinner."

MRS. WINTON: "Don't hurry!"

WINTON, to PHILIPPA: "You don't look as if you were very anxious about your parasol, Philippa."

PHILIPPA, dropping her eyes: "Oh no. It's the handkerchief on it."

MRS. WINTON, to CAMP: "Then it wasn't the four-masted schooner, after all?"

CAMP: "Why, not altogether. But we can't say, you see, till we've found the parasol."

MRS. WINTON: "Oh, you 're waiting for that. Well, you can't be too cautious."

CAMP: "No, but as soon as we find it, we 'll wave it over the top of the bank. That is, Philippa will." He looks round: "But where is Philippa?" She has, in fact, slipped out of the room.

MRS. WINTON, going to the window: "She 's running down toward the beach. Hadn't you better follow her this time, Mr. Camp?" She turns to find that CAMP has vanished too, and that she is alone with her husband.

XI

MRS. WINTON; WINTON

WINTON: "Well?"

MRS. WINTON: "Well, *that 's* over."

WINTON: "Did we find it so?"

MRS. WINTON: "At any rate, you can see that it 's a thorough reconciliation."

WINTON: "Yes, it 's evidently a reconciliation." After a moment: "I 'm not sure it 's a solution."

MRS. WINTON: "If we can't have solutions, we 'd better have reconciliations."

A MASTERPIECE OF DIPLOMACY

THE Scene is in the summer-cottage of MR. and MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS, in a Boston suburb, and the space where they encounter, from opposite doors at the moment the action opens, is a square hall-way, with the stairs climbing out of one corner of it, and a fireplace in the other, after a fashion no longer very novel in the architecture of summer-cottages. It is rather a close morning in August, but all the windows are shut, and a fire is briskly burning on the hearth.

I

ROBERTS, at sight of his wife: "Well, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS, at sight of her husband: "Well, Edward?"

ROBERTS: "How is the child?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Where is the doctor?"

ROBERTS: "He wasn't at home."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Not at home! Oh! Then I'm sure you will approve of what I've done. And I was so afraid I had made a mistake!"

ROBERTS: "A mistake?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes. About the doctor. He was in such a violent perspiration that I couldn't help being alarmed about him, though, of course, I know that perspiration is generally a very good thing. But it simply rolls off him, and he keeps begging for something to eat."

ROBERTS: "The doctor?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "The doctor! No! Haven't you just told me he wasn't at home?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, but I left word for him to come as soon as he could, and I thought perhaps he had got my message and run. The perspiration, you know."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, poor little Bob, he's in a perfect drip, and he keeps wanting to have his clothes on. But you're perspiring yourself, Edward; and *you've* been running. I don't know what I shall do! I've made the fire here, so as to keep Robby from taking cold; and I don't dare to put

the window up, for fear of the draught, and you must be just simply expiring. Why *did* you run so, dear?"

ROBERTS: "I didn't run. But it's like an oven, out of doors. And I walked rather fast, for I wanted to get back and see how the child was, especially when I found the doctor wasn't at home."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, you did just as I should have done, and I'm so glad now I telephoned for Dr. Lawton."

ROBERTS: "Dr. Lawton?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes; as soon as this terrible perspiration set in I felt that we oughtn't to wait another instant, for it might be a case of life and death, and I knew you wouldn't like to take any risks; and when I remembered that you mightn't find Dr. Williams at home, I was perfectly wild, and I telephoned at once for Dr. Lawton to come instantly; and it was very well I did so, for *he* wasn't at home, either. But Lou Bemis was there, and she told me to keep up courage and, as soon as her father came in, she would send him flying. Did you leave word for Dr. Williams to hurry?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, I left a very urgent message on his slate. I—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I hope you underlined it, Edward! You never *will* underline things, even the most important!"

ROBERTS: "Well, I underlined this, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS: "How many times? Three times?"

ROBERTS: "I think it was three times—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Because if you don't do it three times, it isn't the least use in the world. Are you sure it was three times?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, I think so—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "And did you put an exclamation after it? Three?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, how *could* you be so careless, Edward? If you didn't put three exclamations, you might as well not have gone. He'll just take his time to it, and Robby may be in a collapse by the time he gets here. He's furious now. Listen!"

A WRATHFUL VOICE FROM ABOVE: "I want to get up! I want to have my clothes on! I want my breakfast!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, that's the way he's been going on the whole time since you left. Dear, dear! I wish the doctor would come. I don't see what keeps them all! It's as much as Amy can do to hold

him in bed. He's as strong as a lion, and I know it's just his delirium. They're always so when they're delirious."

THE WRATHFUL VOICE AGAIN: "No, I don't love you a bit, and you're a hateful old thing! And I want my clothes. I won't have the doctor! I ain't sick, and I'm going to get up! I am, too! When Uncle Willis comes, I'll tell him how you've acted. I'm hungry, and I want my breakfast!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "There!"

ROBERTS: "I'll go up to him—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, no, Edward! You'll be sure to give way to him, and Amy can manage him nicely. And I want you to be here to receive the doctor. I'll run back and relieve Amy; she must be perfectly worn out, poor thing. He fights so."

ROBERTS: "But if he's in a perspiration, Agnes—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "But it isn't a *common* perspiration, Edward! Of course if it were any other time, and they were not quarantining everybody everywhere, and almost firing on them in New York, I might think it was a very good thing; but as it *is*, I can't do anything till the doctor comes; and if he doesn't come pretty soon, I don't

know what we shall do with the child. I wish you had put three exclamations after the hurry! I'm sure I've done my part. I've kindled the fire here, and shut every window in the house, so that the heat can all go up into his room, and I've got the flannels all ready heating in the oven, so that if the collapse does come, I can swathe him in them from head to foot; and I don't see how you could be so heartless, Edward, as not to put three exclamations when you were about it.".

ROBERTS: "Well, perhaps Dr. Lawton will get here at once—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, and it's fortunate I happened to think of him! I don't know what would happen if I didn't keep my mind on everything and everywhere at once. I don't mean to reproach you, Edward; and I know you're perfectly devoted to the children, but if you only could have had the forethought to put three excla—"

THE FURIOUS VOICE: "Ya-a-a-a! I will, I will, I will! You shan't keep me in bed! I want my clothes! I want my breakfast: I want my poppa!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, dear—"

ROBERTS: "Yes, Bob—"

MRS. ROBERTS, in an awful voice:

"Edward, I'm astonished at you! Just when we got him nicely quieted down, and he's in the wildest delirium!"

THE FURIOUS VOICE: "I want my poppa!"

ROBERTS: "But the child is calling me! What shall I do, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do! Stay where you are, Edward, if you are *half* a father! You must be here, and receive the doctor. And be sure to keep him, so that I can come down and tell him the history of the case before he sees Bobby, or he'll be all prejudiced, especially if it's Dr. Lawton; you know how headstrong he always is, and wants to see the patient before you can get in a word. Oh dear! I almost wish I hadn't called him."

ROBERTS: "Perhaps Dr. Williams will get here first."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, how *good* you are, Edward, and how *thoughtful*! Of *course* he'll be here first, and I never thought of it."

THE FURIOUS VOICE: "Poppa! Poppa! Poppa! I want my poppa!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, darling! in a moment! Papa's coming! O Edward, how can you let me lie so to the poor darling, and perhaps he's in the last stages!"

ROBERTS, in a stifled voice: "But what shall I do, Agnes? You won't let me go to him, or answer him; and—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes, put it all on me, dear! And when I've been through so much already— There!" At the sound of a step on the verandah MRS. ROBERTS shrinks together for flight, and with one foot on the stair and her skirts gathered in her hand, she turns to her husband with a stage-whisper: "It's the doctor, and I don't care which doctor it is, you must keep him here till I can make Robby a little presentable and throw on something so that I shan't be such a *perfect* fright, and dash the comb through my hair. Don't let him come till I send Amy down to let you know when. I'm not going to have the doctor find her there, and pretending to care more for the child than his own mother; she'd like to, well enough. Don't wait for Bella to open the door. Open it yourself, and—U-u-u-gh!" This cry feebly represents the emotion of MRS. ROBERTS as the steps on the verandah approach, and the door is flung open without any pull at the bell, revealing the face and figure of MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL. "Willis! How could you?"

II

CAMPBELL AND THE ROBERTSES

CAMPBELL: "Could what?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I thought it was the doctor! I was *sure* it was!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, perhaps it is. What do you want with the doctor? Who 's sick!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "'Sh! Robby—"

CAMPBELL: "What 's the matter with Bob, this time? Cholera?"

MRS. ROBERTS, whimpering: "Oh, there you are! I don't see how you can say such a thing. He 's been in the most frightful agony, and he 's had a nap since, and now he 's all in a cold perspiration, and he insists upon getting up and putting on his clothes and having his breakfast, and it 's as much as Amy and I can do to manage him: he struggles like a maniac. She 's almost exhausted, poor thing."

CAMPBELL: "What 's she doing?"

THE WRATHFUL VOICE FROM ABOVE: "She 's holding me in bed, Uncle Willis, and she 's keeping me from having my clothes on, and getting any breakfast! O uncle, uncle! Come up here and make her stop!"

CAMPBELL: "*I* can't make her stop, Bob—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "'Sh, for shame, Willis, spoiling everything! He mustn't know you're here, or we can't do a thing with him, and we *must* keep him in bed, now, till the doctor comes, or it may be as much as his life is worth."

CAMPBELL: "What doctor have you sent for?"

ROBERTS: "I've just been to Dr. Williams, but he wasn't at home, and I left word—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "And I got so excited that I couldn't wait any longer, and I telephoned for Dr. Lawton, and Lou Bemis is going to send him the instant he comes in. They can consult together, if the case is very dangerous, and I'm sure I never saw anything like it; perfectly bathed in an ice-cold perspiration, rolling off him in great beads."

CAMPBELL: "Who?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Robby!"

CAMPBELL: "I thought you meant Roberts. He looks as if he was ready to float away. What have you got a fire for on a day like this?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "It's to send the heat

into Robby's room, and prevent his taking cold, in the perspiration."

CAMPBELL: "Well, if you want to send heat up into his room, why don't you open the doors and windows down here and make a draught?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do you think that would do it?"

CAMPBELL: "Of course it would; and besides, it's a great deal hotter outside than it is here. What's the matter with Bob, anyway? Been eating something?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "He's been eating everything!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, from above: "Agnes! Agnes! I can't manage this boy any longer!"

MRS. ROBERTS, flying up the stairs: "I'm coming, Amy! I don't see how I could be so heartless as to leave you alone with him so long, anyway. But I had to stop and ask Edward about the doctor, and to tell him about the case so that he could explain it; and then Willis came in, and I've been advising with him; but I know you must be dropping dead, and I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself, and I shall never be grateful enough to you for it, the longest day I—" Her voice gradually

loses itself in the regions above, which she vanishes into before it becomes wholly inaudible.

III

CAMPBELL AND ROBERTS

CAMPBELL, calling after her: "I'll stay here with Roberts and help him explain when the doctors come. We'll have a doctor apiece to explain to, if they happen to come together."

ROBERTS: "Good heavens, Willis! You don't suppose they'll come together."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't know what's to prevent them."

ROBERTS: "But wouldn't it be rather awkward?"

CAMPBELL: "It would be deucedly awkward, my dear fellow; but you ought to have thought of that before you called them both. If they happen here together, and the case turns out to be a rather simple one, not calling for a consultation of physicians, the doctors may be a little bit put out about it. You know how peppery old Lawton is where professional etiquette is concerned."

ROBERTS: "Is he? I didn't know—"

CAMPBELL: "And I suppose he'll wonder why you should have called in a stranger, when your old family physician was in the neighbourhood. Lawton will be hurt. But you can easily make it right with him. You can tell him you prefer homeopathy for your children; some people do, you know; it's milder."

ROBERTS: "Do you think that would do, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes; it's the only way; and I'll tackle Williams. I'll tell him it was such a trifling case, you thought you wouldn't call in a regular practitioner. That'll give him confidence in himself."

ROBERTS: "I don't think that would do, Willis—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, perhaps it wouldn't. Perhaps we'd better trust to inspiration. But we've got to take one apiece, and see what Providence will do for us. What makes Agnes think Bob is so very bad?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know, I'm sure. He was in a good deal of pain when I left, and now he's in a profuse perspiration."

CAMPBELL: "Well, that sounds rather threatening, but I think when the doctor comes you'd better not give him the history

of the case. I think you'd better devote yourself to explaining why you called another doctor. Now, if they both come together, which doctor do you think you had better take? Do you think you could manage best with that cranky old Lawton, with his punctilious medical etiquette, and his contempt of homeopathy, or little Williams, with his sensitiveness, and conceit, and quick temper, and his—"

ROBERTS: "I—I don't know which I had better take, Willis."

CAMPBELL: "I'd willingly take old Lawton, but he never believes a word I say; and I'd take Williams, but he's got a notion that I'm always laughing at him. I'm afraid I can't be of much use to you, Roberts."

ROBERTS: "Oh, but surely, Willis, you're not going to back out altogether?"

CAMPBELL: "No, not back out. I'll stay by and throw in a word or two, when I see it's needed. You'll get on swimmingly." To MRS. CAMPBELL, who appears on the stairs somewhat dishevelled and very heated-looking: "Hello, Amy!" MRS. CAMPBELL descends the stairs, and reaches the level of the hall-way, while she is speaking.

IV

MRS. CAMPBELL AND THE TWO MEN

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What is that you're trying to put Edward up to, Willis? I insist upon knowing."

CAMPBELL: "What's the matter, Amy? You look as though you had been having a little flirtation with a cyclone."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Never mind how I look, or what I've been flirting with. What have you been putting Edward up to?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well, if you don't want him to do what I say, you can take the case in hand yourself. The simple fact is that he's called in Williams, and Agnes has called in Lawton, and the two doctors are going to arrive here together as mad as hornets, and I was just telling Roberts how to manage them. But I don't want to force my advice on any one."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "How do you know they'll arrive together, and be as mad as hornets?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, my dear, as soon as you *see* them arrive together, you watch out whether they're as mad as hornets or not.

That 's all! What do you want Roberts here to say to them when they both come in together?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "They won't both come together." She goes to one of the windows and looks out. "There comes Dr. Williams, and he 's quite alone. There 's not another soul in sight, and he 's hurrying like everything."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, you must smuggle him out of the way, as quick as he gets into the house, and leave the coast clear for Dr. Lawton. Perhaps old Lawton hasn't started at all, yet, and you can stop him. Can't you call up Mrs. Bemis, and tell her that Rob is all right and her father needn't come?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But what if he isn't all right?"

CAMPBELL: "Why then, here 's Dr. Williams to make him so."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "That is so—"

ROBERTS: "Yes, do speak to her, Amy, and Willis and I will meet Dr. Williams here—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, I will if *you* wish it, Edward, but I'm not sure." She goes to the telephone in another room and is heard ringing, and then conducting the one-

sided dialogue of the telephone: "Is that you, Lou? Yes, well! It's Mrs. Bemis I want. Are you Mrs. Bemis? Yes, well! This is Mrs. Campbell. Amy, you know. Well; I'm speaking for Mrs. Roberts. Robby is much better. He's quite well, and if your father hasn't started yet— What? Is that you, Mrs. Bemis? Hello! Who is that? Lou? Yes, well! If Dr. Lawton hasn't started yet, Mrs. Roberts thinks it isn't worth while for him to come, and— What? Oh, my goodness, Willis" —she rushes into the hall-way again as she pronounces the dreadful words — "He's started as fast as he can drive, and he'll be here before we can turn round. What shall we do?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, I'll tell you what! Roberts, here, has got to use a little —finesse, a little diplomacy."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "You know he can't!"

ROBERTS: "You know I'm never up to that sort of thing, Willis. I really can't help thinking, although I value your kindness so much, Willis, and appreciate your wish to help me, that perhaps it would be best, after all, to treat the matter frankly."

CAMPBELL: "How, frankly?"

ROBERTS: "Why, simply tell both of the

doctors, when they come, that we called one because we didn't think the other would get here in time, and—and—throw ourselves on their mercy, don't you know."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, a nice time you would have on old Lawton's mercy! It would never do in the world, Roberts. You would make the most fearful mess of it."

ROBERTS: "I'm afraid we should make a fearful mess of it the other way, I do indeed. I'm not at all equal to it, Willis. You know how to carry these things off naturally, but I—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I think you are quite right, Edward. It's much better to be honest about things."

CAMPBELL: "You wouldn't know how to be honest about a thing if you tried, Amy. You leave Roberts to me."

ROBERTS: "No, Willis, I don't know how —I can't."

CAMPBELL: "Well, in this instance, you have simply *got* to; or you'll have the awfulest row— By George, Amy, why shouldn't *you* use the finesse, or the diplomacy? You'd be the very one for a thing of that kind. I don't say it to flatter you, but when it comes to a little fibbing—in a good cause, of course—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, after a moment of apparent fascination with the notion: "No, I shall have nothing to do with it. I shouldn't mind the fibbing—for the cause *is* good—but I should know that you had something underhanded in it, and were just trying to get me into a scrape. No, Willis, I can't trust you, even in a case of life and death."

CAMPBELL: "Well, better put up your hair, anyway, Amy; and there 's something stringing out of your neck— 'Sh! There 's his step on the piazza!" MRS. CAMPBELL runs to the mirror in the corner of the hall-way, and hastily reorders her dress and hair, and turns again to her husband.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Will that do?"

CAMPBELL, laughing: "Perfectly."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I don't believe it; unless you 're just laughing to tease me."

CAMPBELL: "I 'm not, Amy, indeed. And now, as soon as he rings, Roberts and I will get out of this, and let you receive him, and then you 'll know that I haven't put up any job on you. Now my plan is that Roberts shall stay in the library, on one side of the hall, here, and I 'll stay in the dining-room on the other side. If old Lawton comes before you get Williams out of the house,

I'll receive him in the dining-room, and prime him with a little sherry, and talk round him, and keep him amused till Williams is gone. And you must smuggle him down the back way, and Roberts will be there in the library, and shut the door, and then I'll steal out, and get upstairs with Lawton, and then Roberts can open the door, and hustle the other fellow out, and get him into his buggy, and have him off, and old Lawton will never suspect anything." He glances out of the window: "By George, there comes Lawton down the road now, and there isn't an instant to lose! Poke Williams right into the library there with Roberts, the instant he appears, and shut the door on them, and— 'Sh! There's his step! He's crossing the verandah! He's ringing!" The bell is heard. "Come, Roberts!" ROBERTS starts to follow CAMPBELL into the dining-room. "No, no! You're to be in the library, you know." He turns ROBERTS about in the right direction by main force. "And remember, you're to take him up out of the door at the other end of the library, and then get him out of the house by the back stairs." He closes the library door upon ROBERTS and retreats to the dining-room. At the

same moment MRS. CAMPBELL opens the hall door to DR. WILLIAMS.

V

DR. WILLIAMS AND MRS. CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL: "We don't stand upon ceremony this morning, doctor; I don't know where the maids all are. We've been terribly frightened about poor little Robby, and I don't know what you'll think of him. But we've kept him in bed till you came, though he's been perfectly furious to get up and have his clothes on."

DR. WILLIAMS, standing with his hat in one hand, and his case of medicines in the other: "Get up and have his clothes on?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, his mother is afraid he may be a little delirious. But won't you just step in here and speak with Mr. Roberts? He would like to see you first." She throws open the library door, and DR. WILLIAMS disappears within, looking mystified. As she closes the door on him and turns away, CAMPBELL shows himself at the dining-room door, and addresses her in a stage whisper.

VI

MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL: "Splendid, Amy! I couldn't have done it better myself. Now, if you'll only manage old Lawton half as well, our lives will be saved."

MRS. CAMPBELL, whispering: "Dr. Lawton will be more difficult. Willis, I believe I shall let you receive Dr. Lawton."

CAMPBELL: "No, no! You mustn't think of it. You are doing magnificently, Amy! It will be such a joke on old Lawton when we're all safely out of it! Say the first thing that comes into your head, and it will be right." He runs to the window and peeps. "He's there! He's hitching his horse, and he'll be at the door in half a minute. Courage, Amy, and luck to you."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, Willis! Don't leave me! You know I shall be perfectly helpless in Dr. Lawton's hands. You know how merciless he is, if he suspects anything."

CAMPBELL: "Old Lawton? Well, Amy, if you couldn't manage old Lawton! All you have got to do is to send him in to me, and I'll keep him from going upstairs till

Edward gets the other fellow out of the house, and the coast is clear."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis, you *mustn't* go. Stay and receive him with me."

CAMPBELL: "I tell you I can't. It will spoil everything. He 'll be sure to smell a rat if I 'm with you."

MRS. CAMPBELL, in a lamentable voice: "He *always* smells a rat!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, he won't this time. There he is, coming up the verandah steps. Now, keep your wits about you, Amy, do! And send him right in here to me." He retreats towards the dining-room door.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, how can you be so cruel, unkind, and inconsiderate! Well, now, I don't care *how* badly I manage, and I shall just be glad of it if I make a mess of the whole thing." The bell rings, and she pulls the door open and admits DR. LAWTON. "Oh, how very kind of you, doctor! Agnes has been worried to death, asking you to come in your vacation. But poor little Rob has been acting so strangely that she couldn't help feeling alarmed, and she knew that there was no one like you, and she telephoned you on the impulse of the moment; and it 's *so* good of you to come." She glances round at the dining-

room door, and catches a glimpse of CAMPBELL making frantic gestures of approval and encouragement. "Won't you sit down a moment, and I'll go and tell—"

VII

DR. LAWTON AND MRS. CAMPBELL

DR. LAWTON: "No. I'd better see the patient at once, if he's in an alarming condition."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, he is! But hadn't I better get you a fan, or a lemonade, or something! It's so very warm this morning."

DR. LAWTON: "I should think it was—in here. What have you got a fire for this morning?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why, Agnes kindled it. She thought that Rob might take cold, he's in such a drip of perspiration, and she didn't realise how hot it was outdoors. She wanted to send the heat up into his room."

DR. LAWTON, throwing open the windows: "Well, she hasn't succeeded then. And it's a very good thing she hasn't. It's enough

to kill the child, let alone the doctor. By the way, whose horse is that out there?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with dismay, which she tries to make pass for astonishment: "Horse?"

DR. LAWTON: "Yes; I didn't say *cow*, Mrs. Campbell."

MRS. CAMPBELL, looking resolutely away from the window in the direction of the dining-room door, which CAMPBELL closes: "Is there any horse besides yours, there, Dr. Lawton?"

DR. LAWTON: "Yes, there is another doctor's horse. The signs are unmistakable. Who 's in the dining-room, there?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Dining-room? Why, I suppose the maids—"

DR. LAWTON, darting suddenly upon her: "Isn't Mr. Campbell in there?" As she hesitates, he smiles, and continues in a rapid whisper: "I see. They called another doctor first, and when he didn't come at once, they telephoned to me. That is all perfectly natural, and all perfectly right. I suppose you 're afraid I shall be vexed at finding another doctor here. I think it 's the jolliest kind of fix for Roberts, but I haven't the heart to tease him about it. If it was your husband, Mrs. Campbell, I

shouldn't mind doing it. He's always teasing somebody. Tell me, now, what's his little game at present? Concealment is impossible, you know, and you might as well be honest as not."

MRS. CAMPBELL, allured by the fact: "I suppose I really might." She whispers throughout, and so does DR. LAWTON.

DR. LAWTON: "Better. What is he up to in there?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Will you ever tell him I told you?"

DR. LAWTON: "Never!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, it would really be such a good joke on Willis, and I should like to see him come up with, once."

DR. LAWTON: "My dear lady, if you will only tell me, he shall be come up with as he never was in his life before!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But wouldn't it be a little wrong, doctor? I shouldn't want you to tease him *very* much!"

DR. LAWTON: "Not so as to injure him, of course; but just to give him a little lesson. You can safely trust me. I am your family physician, you know, and I will be responsible for the result."

MRS. CAMPBELL, reflectively: "That is true. And it would be just serving him

right, wouldn't it, for leaving me here to take the brunt of it with you, and to try to keep you in the dark."

DR. LAWTON: "It would be your duty, Mrs. Campbell, in an event of that kind."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And perhaps it would cure him of his teasing, if he could feel how it was himself."

DR. LAWTON: "It would be the saving of him. It would bring out all his good and noble qualities. What is his game?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I have the greatest mind in the world to tell you, only I don't like to do anything that a man would think underhand."

DR. LAWTON: "A man would think it the frankest kind of thing. A woman might think it underhand, but—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, I don't care what a woman would think. And it would be such a joke on Willis! Well, you see—you see—"

DR. LAWTON: "Yes, yes!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "You see, Dr. Williams—"

DR. LAWTON: "Oh—little pills! Well, he isn't such a bad sort of fellow. Go on!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Agnes sent for him,

and then, while Edward was gone, Robby broke into such a profuse perspiration that she got frightened, and telephoned for you. And when Willis found out what they had done, he began to tease, and to try to make them believe it was something awful, and that you would both be so angry that you would never forgive it—"

DR. LAWTON, rubbing his hands: "Capital! Just as I suspected. Oh, I 'll fool him to the top of his bent! Go on!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And poor Edward *wanted* to tell the truth about it, as soon as you came, and Willis wouldn't let him. And he said Edward must go into the library, and receive Dr. Williams, and let him see the child, and then smuggle him out the back way, and he would be waiting in the dining-room, and I was to show you in there to him—"

DR. LAWTON: "Glorious! O young man, how I will block your game!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And he would keep you amused there till Dr. Williams was safely out of the house, and let you go upstairs, and you would never know anything about it."

DR. LAWTON: "Oh, *won't* I? Well, Mrs. Campbell, now I 'm going to begin.

You say: *Just step into the dining-room, doctor, and I'll call Mr. Roberts.*"

MRS. CAMPBELL, aloud: "*Yes, Mr. Roberts would like to see you first, and if you'll step into the dining-room a moment out of this terrible heat, and won't mind its being in a little disorder—*"

DR. LAWTON, whispering: "Is any one in the library now?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, opening the door to peep in: "No."

DR. LAWTON: "All right." Aloud: "*Thank you, I'll wait in the library, if you please, and look at a word I want to see in Roberts's dictionary.*" He goes into the library and closes the door after him, and at the same instant CAMPBELL flings open the dining-room door, and flies out upon his wife.

VIII

MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL: "Great heavens, Amy, what in the world are you up to? Don't you know that Roberts is in there with Dr. Williams? You showed them in there yourself, half a minute ago." CAMPBELL

is obliged to speak in an impassioned whisper, so that he shall not be heard in the library.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why, so I did! What shall I do?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, do! You can't do anything now. The die is cast, the jig is up, the fat 's in the fire, the milk 's spilt."

MRS. CAMPBELL, mysteriously: "I don't believe it is."

CAMPBELL: "Don't believe it is! What do you mean?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Willis, I have a great mind to tell you something."

CAMPBELL: "Tell me something?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "'Sh! Yes, it would be such a joke on Dr. Lawton."

CAMPBELL: "On Lawton! Out with it, Amy! I'm round paying a heavy premium for jokes on Lawton."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What will you give me if I tell you?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, anything! Everything! A kiss."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Stuff! Will you ever let any human being know that I told you?"

CAMPBELL: "Red-hot pincers wouldn't get it out of me."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, I peeped before I let him go in, and made sure Dr. Williams had gone upstairs. He wants to block your game, Willis. But I don't think it was very nice of him to try to get a wife to join against her husband; do you?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, that was very wrong, indeed! I wonder at Lawton. What did he want you to do?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "If I were sure that it was my sense of duty—"

CAMPBELL: "You may bet anything it is, Amy. I can tell when you're doing a thing because you're mad, and when you're doing it from a sense of duty. You look altogether different."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And it isn't at all for the joke—"

CAMPBELL: "*Joke*, Amy? *You* joke! You would rather perish. You wouldn't know how, even if you wanted to. What is it?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, then you think women have no sense of humour?"

CAMPBELL: "I? I think they are so truly humorous that they needn't joke to show it; and if you saw anything funny in giving Dr. Lawton away, you wouldn't do it. What is the old reprobate up to, Amy?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, then, I'll tell you, if you won't give *me* away, as you call it."

CAMPBELL: "Amy!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "He made me confess—or the same as confess—that there was another doctor here, and you were to keep it from him, till we could get Dr. Williams out of the house, and then let him go and see Rob, and he would never know anything about it. And I know he's going to bounce out of the library in a minute, and pretend to be furious, and block your game, as he calls it."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, *is* he! I guess two can play at blocking that game!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I'm not going to stay, Willis, and you may get out of the boggle the best way you can."

CAMPBELL: "You are an angel, Amy, and nothing proves it more than your wanting to sneak out of the difficulty that your perfidy has got two men into. Angels of your description always do that."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, if that's the way you talk, Willis, I'll take back everything I've said. Dr. Lawton doesn't know anything about my telling you. Now, how do you feel?"

CAMPBELL: "Terribly. But I think I'll act just as if he did. Go, my love; leave me to my fate."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I shall not do it now, because I see that you really wish me to. I shall stay, and see what a miserable mess you will make of it. I shall stay, and triumph over both of you. And I shall laugh and laugh. Oh, how I shall la— Wo-o-o! O my goodness, he's coming!" At the sound of the knob turning in the library door, MRS. CAMPBELL starts in fright, and with a backward glance at DR. LAWTON as he emerges, she flies from the scene.

IX

DR. LAWTON AND CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL, gaily: "Ah, Dr. Lawton!"

DR. LAWTON, grimly: "Ah, Mr. Campbell!"

CAMPBELL: "Awfully good of you to let them disturb you in your vacation, this way. Roberts will be down in a moment. He wants to see you before you go to Rob. Agnes wants him to explain the case to you. It's rather a peculiar case—"

DR. LAWTON: "I don't think I'll wait to

see Mr. Roberts, Mr. Campbell. I will ask you to say to Mrs. Roberts that I preferred not to wait—simply that."

CAMPBELL with affected consternation: "Why, Dr. Lawton, I hope you don't mind having had to wait a few moments for Roberts. I'll run right upstairs for him. I know he'll be extremely mortified and distressed."

DR. LAWTON, as before: "The waiting is nothing. I don't mind the waiting—"

CAMPBELL, with affected humility: "Then may I ask—"

DR. LAWTON, as before: "Yes, sir, you may ask, and I have not the slightest objection to answering. Another physician has been called here, before me."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, but, Dr. Lawton, I assure you—"

DR. LAWTON, always with the greatest sternness: "Don't attempt to trifle with me, sir. When I hitched my horse before the door, I found another doctor's horse hitched there: an unmistakable doctor's horse, chewing the top of the post, and drowsing as peacefully as the flies would let him." He turns aside to conceal a laugh.

CAMPBELL: "Well, I recognise the type,

doctor, but I think you must be mistaken—"

DR. LAWTON: "No, sir, I am not mistaken. How should I be mistaken?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, the grocer's horse behaves that way, too, I believe."

DR. LAWTON: "But grocers don't drive round in top-buggies!"

CAMPBELL: "That is true." He appears to fall into extreme dejection.

DR. LAWTON: "Besides, the motive for this delay that I have been subjected to is not sufficiently accounted for on the ground that Mr. Roberts wishes to explain a case to me that I can judge of a great deal better than he can. No, sir! They have another doctor up there with the patient, and they are waiting to smuggle him out of the house before they let me go up. I suspect your hand in this, Mr. Campbell, and I will not suffer you to trifle with me. You are keeping me here until Dr. Williams can be got out of the house, and then you are to let me go through the farce of prescribing for the patient."

CAMPBELL, with simulated deprecation: "Now, Dr. Lawton—"

DR. LAWTON, with every token of suppressed fury: "Well, sir?"

CAMPBELL: "If I were to give you my honour that there was not another doctor in this house?"

DR. LAWTON: "I advise you not to do so." He seizes CAMPBELL by the arm, and pulls him to the window. "Look there, sir! What do you say to that? Do you see my horse hitched at one end of that rail, out there, and do you see Dr. Williams's horse hitched at the other end of the rail? What do you say to that?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, Dr. Lawton, if you force me to be frank, I say that I didn't suppose you began so early in the morning. I don't object to a modest eye-opener, but if a man takes so many as to make him see double—"

DR. LAWTON: "Don't prevaricate, Mr. Campbell! Do you see two doctors' horses there, or don't you?"

CAMPBELL: "I see *one* doctor's horse there."

DR. LAWTON, releasing him, and anxiously scanning his face: "Ah! my poor young friend! This is worse than the simple drunkenness you accuse me of. Are you aware that there is a very serious brain disorder which causes the victim to see but half of a given object, and of two objects to see but one?"

CAMPBELL: "No; is there? Then we had better get another doctor to judge between us, or appeal from Philip after to Philip before his second eye-opener. Come, now, doctor, hadn't you better go home? I'll excuse you to the family, and account for you some way. I don't believe Amy noticed anything; and when you get back, you can sleep it off, and nobody will be the wiser. It isn't habitual with you, and we can hush it up for this once if you 'll only go."

DR. LAWTON, with a fresh access of pretended rage: "No, sir, I will not go! I insist upon seeing Mr. Roberts, and upon verifying the presence of another doctor in this house."

CAMPBELL, with a shrug: "Well, I suppose if you *see* double there's nothing to prevent you from thinking double. But if the solemn assurance of one of your oldest and truest friends—"

THE VOICE FROM OVERHEAD, making itself heard through the closed door: "I won't, I won't, I won't. I don't want any medicine! I know it's nasty. Go away, doctor! I ain't sick!" The voice dies away into the indistinct murmur of other persuasive and menacing voices, and the sound of a struggle terminating in a wild yell.

DR. LAWTON: "There, sir, what do you say to that?"

CAMPBELL: "Say to what?"

DR. LAWTON: "To that outcry, that uproar, that plain proclamation of Dr. Williams's presence."

CAMPBELL: "Why, did you hear anything, doctor?"

DR. LAWTON, with a compassionate shake of his head: "Hearing affected, too. This is very interesting. Will you let me examine your eye, Mr. Campbell?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, certainly." After the doctor has lifted the lid, and peered earnestly into his eye: "Anything green, there?"

DR. LAWTON: "What do you mean, sir?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, nothing, only I think you are doing it splendidly, and it's a pity you shouldn't know how fully I appreciate it. My game is completely blocked. Go on!"

DR. LAWTON, after a moment: "Who told you?"

CAMPBELL: "Amy."

DR. LAWTON, with mock tragedy: "Then, I have been betrayed."

CAMPBELL: "I've been betrayed, too. She told you that I was going to put up a job on you."

DR. LAWTON: "She did. Mrs. Campbell is truth itself."

CAMPBELL: "I should say deceit personified."

DR. LAWTON: "You are Mrs. Campbell's husband. What shall we do now?"

CAMPBELL, offering his hand: "Shake."

DR. LAWTON, taking it: "And then?"

CAMPBELL: "Keep the thing up with increased fervour. Bite the biter; deceive the deceiver; outshine the truth itself in candour."

DR. LAWTON: "Ah, that might be difficult—for some of us! But still I think we had better make the attempt. But first: there isn't anything serious with Rob, is there?"

CAMPBELL: "He's hungry, as I infer from a remark that I heard him make."

DR. LAWTON: "That's a trouble that can always be reached, happily, in our condition of life. Well, where did we leave off?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I think at Rob's giving Dr. Williams's presence away."

DR. LAWTON: "I remember! Well, here goes, then!" He bursts out furiously: "*No, sir; I will not be put off with any such excuse. It is a matter which touches my personal and professional dignity. Where is*

Mr. Roberts, I say?" In a natural tone: "How will that do?"

CAMPBELL: "First rate! Perhaps it was a little too emphatic. I'm afraid Amy will begin to suspect something. Now I'll reply in persuasive accents: *My dear Dr. Lawton, you know that Roberts is incapable of offering you a personal or professional affront. If you will give me a little time, I can explain—*"

DR. LAWTON: "Well, now, I'll retort in a tone of biting sarcasm: *I fancy you will not only want a little time; you will want a little eternity to explain a thing like this. But if Mr. Roberts will not come to me, I will go to Mr. Roberts!*"

CAMPBELL, naturally: "Oh, that's capital! That will fetch them. 'Sh! They're opening the door a little. That's Agnes. I suppose Roberts must have got Williams down the back stair. Now I'll throw myself in your way, here, and attempt to prevent your going up. That will simply madden you. I'll place myself at the foot of the stairs, with folded arms, and say in a voice choked with a sense of duty: *Dr. Lawton, if you so far forget yourself as to attempt to mount a single step toward the room where my poor nephew*

lies in a drip of perspiration, I will— Now, you go on, in a perfect frenzy."

Dr. Lawton: "*You will what, sir? Do you mean to say that you will use physical force to prevent me?*" Naturally: "How will that do?"

Campbell: "The very thing! Now I 'll come in: *I don't know what you call it, but I shall keep you from going upstairs.*"

Dr. Lawton, dramatically: "*Stand aside, sir!*"

Campbell: "Not so loud, quite. They 're listening. I 'll give you the right pitch: *I will not stand aside. If you mount these stairs, it will be over my body, dead or alive.* About like that, you know. Now, we must stamp our feet, and that will bring them." They both stamp their feet, and a sound of swishing dresses and suppressed voices is heard on the little gallery that looks down into the hallway from above. The dresses and the voices are those of Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Campbell; Mrs. Campbell restrains Mrs. Roberts by main force from rushing down and interfering with the quarrel of the men.

X

MRS. ROBERTS AND MRS. CAMPBELL ABOVE; CAMPBELL AND DR. LAWTON BELOW

MRS. CAMPBELL, in bated breath: "Now, do control yourself, Agnes! I tell you they're trying to fool each other. Oh, dear; I wish I hadn't put them up to it! This comes from not sticking to the exact truth. Edward's way is the best; yes, it is, and I shall always stick to it after this, if it kills me."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, but are you *sure* they're trying to fool each other, Amy? Perhaps you're not telling the truth, *now*! If they should be in earnest, I should surely die!" The men continue to dramatise a struggle on the floor below. "Oh, look at them! I can't bear to look at them! Oh, are you sure you're not mistaken, Amy?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't I tell you I put them up to it myself?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I wish Edward would come back, and separate them! I don't see what he's doing with Dr. Williams so long! Of course he had to make the excuse of the garden when he took him down the back way, but he could have

shown him every leaf in it by this time, I should think. Amy, I can't think they're joking. They do struggle so fearfully. They've let each other go at last, but it's simply from exhaustion!"

CAMPBELL, proudly placing himself at the foot of the stairs again, and addressing DR. LAWTON with feigned hauteur: "*I think you are satisfied now, that you can't go upstairs, Dr. Lawton.*"

DR. LAWTON, dramatically: "*We will see, Mr. Campbell. I have kept one little argument in reserve.*" He advances upon CAMPBELL with lifted hand, as if to strike.

CAMPBELL, dramatically: "*What! A blow, Dr. Lawton?*"

DR. LAWTON, dramatically: "*Several, Mr. Campbell, if you insist upon it. Will you stand aside?*"

CAMPBELL, dramatically putting himself into a posture of self-defence: "*Never! And beware, Dr. Lawton! You are an old man, but I will not be answerable for the consequences if you strike me. I will not take a blow from you, much as I respect you, and would like to gratify you. I allow no one to strike me but Mrs. Campbell.*"

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Amy! Is it true? Do you ever strike poor Willis?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't be a goose, Agnes! Doesn't that show you that he's just making fun."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, do you *think* he is? If I could only believe you, Amy, I should bless you the longest day you lived. Is Dr. Lawton making fun, too?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, up to a certain point. But he doesn't seem to be making as much fun as Willis is."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I'm sure he's in the bitterest earnest. See, he's just struck at Willis!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, and Willis has warded off the blow nicely."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, don't look!" She hides her eyes in her hands. "What are they doing now?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "He keeps striking at Willis, and Willis wards off his blows without returning one of them. Oh, isn't he glorious! That's his fencing. He can outfence anybody, Willis can. He mustn't strike *him*, but if he lets him strike HIM, I will never speak to him again!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, stop them, somebody, do! O Willis—"

DR. LAWTON, advancing with lifted hand: "*I demand to see Mr. Roberts!*"

MRS. ROBERTS, in wild appeal: "Oh, but he isn't here, Dr. Lawton! Indeed he isn't! He's out in the garden with Dr. Williams, and as soon as he can get rid of him he'll come right back and explain everything. It all happened through my being so anxious, and telephoning for you after he had gone for Dr. Williams, because he hated so to disturb you in your vaca— O my goodness, he doesn't hear a word I say!" The men renew their struggle. "O Amy, do you think they're still in fun?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with misgiving: "I don't believe they're as much in fun as they were at first. I—"

MRS. ROBERTS, wringing her hands: "Oh, well, then speak to Willis, do, and see if you can make him hear you!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with great but faltering sternness: "Willis! Willis! I want you to stop that absurd nonsense! You will give me a nervous headache if you keep on. You know that Dr. Lawton doesn't mean anything, and you're just trying to frighten us, and I think it's a shame. Stop, Willis! Oh, dear! he doesn't hear me, or pretends he doesn't. I don't know what I shall do."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, then, we must both scream as loud as ever we can scream."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, that's the only thing we can do now." They both scream at the top of their voices. CAMPBELL and DR. LAWTON desist, and look smilingly up at them, with an air of apparent surprise and interest. At the same moment ROBERTS and DR. WILLIAMS burst wildly in through the door from the verandah.

XI

DR. WILLIAMS; ROBERTS; AND THE OTHERS

ROBERTS, with shuddering dismay: "What's the matter? What are you screaming for? Is Robby in a relapse? Willis— Dr. Lawton—what is it?"

CAMPBELL, with great calm: "What is what? Have you noticed anything, Dr. Lawton?"

DR. LAWTON, with kind serenity: "I'm sure I couldn't say. Has there been anything unusual going on?"

MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. CAMPBELL: "They have been struggling violently together, and we screamed."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Dr. Lawton was trying

to come upstairs to speak with you, and Willis wouldn't let him."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "They were just fooling us, and I will settle with Willis when we get home."

MRS. ROBERTS: "We were terribly frightened."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I was not frightened, but I was never so indignant in my life."

CAMPBELL: "Do you understand all this, Dr. Lawton?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis! I will not stand this any longer, and if you keep it up, I shall go into hysterics. Now you just tell Edward the truth?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, Amy, I will. You see, Roberts, that as soon as Dr. Lawton got here he suspected another physician, and he taxed Amy with it when she let him in, and instead of confessing at once, as any one else would have done, that he had been called simply because Edward hadn't found Dr. Williams at home—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh!"

CAMPBELL: "—she invented a cock-and-bull story, and then, because it wouldn't work, she told him that I was trying to play it on him; and they arranged

it between them that they would let me do it—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I think it was perfectly justifiable. You 're always doing such things to me."

DR. LAWTON: "You were simply acting for his best good, Mrs. Campbell!"

CAMPBELL: "Then she gave Lawton away to me, the first chance she had. But as soon as Lawton and I got together we saw through each other in a minute, and we concluded to let her have as much of her game as she wanted. That 's all. Sorry to disturb Agnes, but that couldn't be helped. Of course, we had to make some noise in the course of our little drama—"

ROBERTS: "Fortunately Dr. Williams hadn't driven away; and when I heard the alarming uproar here, I called him in again. I thought Robby might—"

LAWTON: "Yes, Roberts, you might have remembered I was here. Well, I forgive you! Dr. Williams, shall we go up together and see if our patient is in a relapse?" He offers DR. WILLIAMS his hand.

DR. WILLIAMS, taking it, and meaning to say something civil: "I think I can

safely leave him to you *now*, doctor. There 's nothing really the matter—"

DR. LAWTON: "Oh, you 're very good!"

CAMPBELL: "*You* seem to be getting compliments on all hands, Lawton. What 's the matter with a few words of modest praise for your fellow conspirator?"

MRS. ROBERTS, to the waitress, who looks out from the dining-room door: "What is it, Bella? Breakfast? Well, now, you must both stay to breakfast with us; and if you decide that Robby can have something, and will only consult together and say what he shall have—"

DR. LAWTON, looking up the stairs at a forlorn little figure, very much dishevelled and imperfectly attired, which appears on the landing: "Suppose we let Robby decide for himself! Would you like some water-melon, Rob?"

DR. WILLIAMS: "Or ice-cream?"

DR. LAWTON: "Or August sweetings?"

DR. WILLIAMS: "Or soda-water?"

DR. LAWTON: "Or peaches and cream?"

CAMPBELL: "Or all together?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Ah, don't tease the child!"

ROBBY, looking wistfully from one to the other as he descends to the floor, and fixing

his eyes on his mother at last: "If you 'll let me come to the table, mamma—I couldn't find all my clothes—I'd like a little milk-toast and tea."

MRS. ROBERTS, stooping and putting his arms round her neck: "O you poor little dirty angel! You shall have anything you want on the table. You won't mind his coming just as he is?" She turns with ROBBY to her guests, who take him into their arms one after another.

DR. LAWTON: "If Rob had another rag on him, I shouldn't feel good enough for his company."

DR. WILLIAMS: "I consider him perfect just as he is."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I will never hold him in bed again!"

ROBBY, after a moment: "You couldn't."

CAMPBELL, catching him up on his shoulder, and dancing into the dining-room with him: "I knew she was just shamming when she pretended to do it."

BRIDE ROSES

A LADY, entering THE FLORIST'S with her muff to her face, and fluttering gaily up to the counter, where THE FLORIST stands folding a mass of loose flowers in a roll of cotton batting: "Good morning, Mr. Eichenlaub! Ah, put plenty of cotton round the poor things, if you don't want them frozen stiff! You have no idea what a day it is, here in your little tropic." She takes away her muff as she speaks, but gives each of her cheeks a final pressure with it, and holds it up with one hand inside as she sinks upon the stool before the counter.

THE FLORIST: "Dropic? With icepergs on the wintows?" He nods his head towards the frosty panes, and wraps a sheet of tissue-paper around the cotton and the flowers.

THE LADY: "But you are not near the windows. Back here it is midsummer!"

THE FLORIST: "Yes, we got a rhevricherator to keep the rhoces from sun-

stroke." He crimps the paper at the top, and twists it at the bottom of the bundle in his hand. "Hier!" he calls to a young man warming his hands at the stove. "Chon, but on your hat, and dtake this to— Holt on! I forgot to but in the cart." He undoes the paper, and puts in a card lying on the counter before him. THE LADY watches him vaguely. "There!" He restores the wrapping, and hands the package to the young man, who goes out with it. "Well, matam?"

THE LADY, laying her muff with her hand in it on the counter, and leaning forward over it: "Well, Mr. Eichenlaub. I am going to be very difficult."

THE FLORIST: "That is what I lige. Then I don't feel so rhesbonsible."

THE LADY: "But to-day, I *wish* you to feel responsible. I want you to take the whole responsibility. Do you know why I always come to you, instead of those places on Fifth Avenue?"

THE FLORIST: "Well, it is a good teal cheaper, for one thing—"

THE LADY: "Not at all! That isn't the reason at all. Some of your things are dearer. It's because you take so much more interest, and you talk over what I

want, and you don't urge me, when I haven't made up my mind. You let me consult you, and you are not cross when I don't take your advice."

THE FLORIST: "You are very goodt, matam."

THE LADY: "Not at all. I am simply just. And now I want you to provide the flowers for my first Saturday: Saturday of this week, in fact, and I want to talk the order all over with you. Are you very busy?"

THE FLORIST: "No; I am qvite at your service. We haf just had to egsegute a larche gommission very soddenly, and we are still in a little dtisorder yet; but—"

THE LADY: "Yes, I see." She glances at the rear of the shop, where the floor is littered with the leaves and petals of flowers, and sprays of fern and evergreen. A woman, followed by a belated smell of breakfast, which gradually mingles with the odour of the plants, comes out of a door there, and begins to gather the larger fragments into her apron. THE LADY turns again, and looks at the jars and vases of cut flowers in the window, and on the counter. "What I can't understand is how you know just the quantity of flowers

to buy every day. You must often lose a good deal."

THE FLORIST: "It gomes out about rhighdt, nearly always. When I get left, sometimes, I can chenerally work dem off on funerals. Now, that bic orter hat I just fill, that wass a funeral. It usedt up all the flowers I hat ofer from yesterday."

THE LADY: "Don't speak of it! And the flowers, are they just the same for funerals?"

THE FLORIST: "Yes, rhoces nearly always. Whidte ones."

THE LADY: "Well, it is too dreadful. I am not going to have roses, whatever I have." After a thoughtful pause, and a more careful look around the shop: "Mr. Eichenlaub, why wouldn't orchids do?"

THE FLORIST: "Well, they would be bretty dtear. You couldn't make any show at all for less than fifteen tollars."

THE LADY, with a slight sigh: "No, orchids wouldn't do. They are fantastic things, anyway, and they are not very effective, as you say. Pinks, anemones, marguerites, narcissus—there doesn't seem to be any great variety, does there?"

THE FLORIST, patiently: "There will be more, lader on."

THE LADY: "Yes, there will be more sun, later on. But now, Mr. Eichenlaub, what do you think of plants in pots, set around?"

THE FLORIST: "Balmss?"

THE LADY, vaguely: "Yes, palms."

THE FLORIST: "Balmss would to. But there would not be very much golor."

THE LADY: "That is true; there would be no colour at all, and my rooms certainly need all the colour I can get into them. Yes, I shall have to have roses, after all. But not white ones!"

THE FLORIST: "Chacks?"

THE LADY: "No; Jacks are too old-fashioned. But haven't you got any other very dark rose? I should like something almost black, I believe."

THE FLORIST, setting a vase of roses on the counter before her: "There is the Matame Hoste."

THE LADY, bending over the roses, and touching one of them with the tip of her gloved finger: "Why, they *are* black, almost! They are nearly as black as black pansies. They are really wonderful!" She stoops over and inhales their fragrance. "Delicious! They are beautiful, but—" abruptly—"they are hideous. Their colour

makes me creep. It is so unnatural for a rose. A rose—a rose ought to be—rose-coloured! Have you no rose-coloured roses? What are those little pink ones there in the window?"

THE FLORIST, going to the window and getting two vases of cut roses, with long stems, both pink, but one kind a little larger than the other: "That is the Matame Watterville, and this is the Matame Cousine. They are sister rhoces; both the same, but the Matame Watterville is a little bigger, and it is a little dtearer."

THE LADY: "They are both exquisite, and they are such a tender almond-bloom pink! I think the Madame Cousine is quite as nice; but of course the larger ones are more effective." She examines them, turning her head from side to side, and then withdrawing a step, with a decisive sigh. "No; they are too pale. Have you nothing of a brighter pink? What is that over there?" She points to a vase of roses quite at the front of the window, and THE FLORIST climbs over the mass of plants and gets it for her.

THE FLORIST: "That is the Midio."

THE LADY: "The what?"

THE FLORIST: "The Midio."

THE LADY: "You will think I am very stupid this morning. Won't you please write it down for me?" THE FLORIST writes on a sheet of wrapping-paper, and she leans over and reads: "Oh! *Meteor!* Well, it is very striking—a little *too* striking. I don't like such a vivid pink, and I don't like the name. Horrid to give such a name to a flower." She puts both hands into her muff, and drifts a little way off, as if to get him in a better perspective. "Can't you suggest something, Mr. Eichenlaub?"

THE FLORIST: "Some kind off yellow rhoce? Dtea-rhoces?"

THE LADY, shaking her head: "Tea-roses are ghastly. I hate yellow roses. I would rather have black, and black is simply impossible. I shall have to tell you just what I want to do. I don't want to work up to my rooms with the flowers; I want to work up to the young lady who is going to pour tea for me. I don't care if there isn't a flower anywhere but on the table before her. I want a colour scheme that shall not have a false note in it, from her face to the tiniest bud. I want them to all *come together*. Do you understand?"

THE FLORIST, doubtfully: "Yes." After

a moment: "What kindt looking yo'ng laty iss she?"

THE LADY: "The most ethereal creature in the world."

THE FLORIST: "Yes; but what sdyle—fair or tark?"

THE LADY: "Oh, fair! Very, very fair, and very, very fragile-looking; a sort of moonlight blonde, with those remote, starry-looking eyes, don't you know, and that pale saffron hair; not the least ashen; and just the faintest, faintest tinge of colour in her face. I suppose you have nothing like the old-fashioned blush-rose? That would be the very thing."

THE FLORIST, shaking his head: "Oh no; there noding like that in a crheen-house rhoce."

THE LADY: "Well, that is exactly what I want. It ought to be something very tall and ethereal; something very, very pale, and yet with a sort of suffusion of colour." She walks up and down the shop, looking at all the plants and flowers.

THE FLORIST, waiting patiently: "Some-t'ing beside rhoces, then?"

THE LADY, coming back to him: "No; it must be roses, after all. I see that nothing else will do. What do you call those?"

She nods at a vase of roses on a shelf behind him.

THE FLORIST, turning and taking them down for her: "Ah, those whidte ones! That is the Pridte. You sait you woultn't haf whidte ones."

THE LADY: "I may have to come to them. Why do they call it the Pride?"

THE FLORIST: "I didn't say Bridte; I said Pridte."

THE LADY: "Oh, Bride! And do they use Bride roses for—"

THE FLORIST: "Yes; and for wedtings, too; for everything." THE LADY leans back a little and surveys the flowers critically. A YOUNG MAN enters, and approaches THE FLORIST, but waits with respectful impatience for THE LADY to transact her affairs. THE FLORIST turns to him inquiringly, and upon this hint he speaks.

THE YOUNG MAN: "I want you to send a few roses—white ones, or nearly white—" He looks at THE LADY: "Perhaps—"

THE LADY: "Oh, not at all! I hadn't decided to take them."

THE FLORIST: "I got blenty this kindt all you want. I can always get them."

THE YOUNG MAN, dreamily regarding the roses: "They look rather chilly." He goes

to the stove, and drawing off his gloves, warms his hands, and then comes back. "What do you call this rose?"

THE FLORIST: "The Pridte."

THE YOUNG MAN, uncertainly: "Oh!" THE LADY moves a little way up the counter towards the window, but keeps looking at THE YOUNG MAN from time to time. She cannot help hearing all that he says. "Haven't you any white rose with a little colour in it? Just the faintest tinge, the merest touch."

THE FLORIST: "No, no; they are whidte, or they are yellow; dtea-rhoces; Marshal Niel—"

THE YOUNG MAN: "Ah, I don't want anything of that kind. What is the palest pink rose you have?"

THE FLORIST, indicating the different kinds in the vases, where THE LADY has been looking at them: "Well, there is nothing lighdter than the Matame Cousine, or the Matame Watterville, here; they are sister rhoces—"

THE YOUNG MAN: "Yes, yes; very beautiful; but too dark." He stops before the Madame Hoste: "What a strange flower! It is almost *black*! What is it for? Funerals?"

THE FLORIST: "No; a good many people lige them. We don't sell them much for funerals; they are too cloomy. They use whidte ones for that: Marshal Niel, dtea-rhoces, this Pridte here, and other whidte ones."

THE YOUNG MAN, with an accent of repulsion: "Oh!" He goes toward the window, and looks at a mass of Easter lilies in a vase there. He speaks as if thinking aloud: "If they had a little colour— But they would be dreadful with colour! Why, you ought to have *something*!" He continues musingly, as he returns to THE FLORIST: "Haven't you got something very delicate, and slender, about the colour of pale apple blossoms? If you had them light enough, some kind of azaleas—"

THE LADY, involuntarily: "Ah!"

THE FLORIST, after a moment, in which he and THE YOUNG MAN both glance at THE LADY, and she makes a sound in her throat to show that she is not thinking of them, and had not spoken in reference to what they were saying: "The only azaleas I haf are these pink ones, and those whidte ones."

THE YOUNG MAN: "And they are too pink and too white. Isn't there anything

tall, and very delicate? Something, well—something like the old-fashioned blush-rose? But with very long stems!"

THE FLORIST: "No, there is noding lige that which gomes in a crheenhouse rhoce. We got a whidte rhoce here"—he goes to his refrigerator, and brings back a long box of roses—"that I didn't think of before." He gives THE LADY an apologetic glance. "You see there is chost the least sdain of rhet on the etch of the leafs."

THE YOUNG MAN, examining the petals of the roses: "Ah, that is very curious. It is a caprice, though."

THE FLORIST: "Yes, it is a kind of sbordt. That rhoce should be berfectly whidte."

THE YOUNG MAN: "On the whole, I don't think it will do. I will take some of those pure white ones. Bride, did you call them?"

THE FLORIST: "Yes, Pridte. How many?"

THE YOUNG MAN: "Oh, a dozen—two dozen; I don't know! I want very long, slender stems, and the flowers with loose open petals; none of those stout, tough-looking little buds. Here! This, and this, and all these; no, I don't want any of those

at all." He selects the different stems of roses, and while THE FLORIST gets a box, and prepares it with a lining of cotton and tissue-paper, he leans over and writes on a card. He pauses and puts up his pencil; then he takes it out again and covers the card with writing. He gives it to THE FLORIST. "I wish that to go into the box where it will be found the first thing." He turns away, and encounters THE LADY'S eyes as she chances to look towards him. "I beg your pardon! But—"

THE LADY, smiling, and extending her hand: "I felt almost *sure* it was you! But I couldn't believe my senses. All the other authorities report you in Rome."

THE YOUNG MAN: "I returned rather suddenly. I just got in this morning. Our steamer was due yesterday, but there was so much ice in the harbour that we didn't work up till a few hours ago."

THE LADY: "You will take all your friends by surprise."

THE YOUNG MAN: "I'm a good deal taken by surprise myself. Two weeks ago I didn't dream of being here. But I made up my mind to come, and—I came."

THE LADY, laughing: "Evidently! Well, now you must come to my Satur-

days; you are just in time for the first one. Some one you know is going to pour tea for me. That ought to be some consolation to you for not having stayed away long enough to escape my hospitalities."

THE YOUNG MAN, blushing and smiling: "Oh, it's a very charming welcome home. I shall be sure to come. She is—everybody is—well, I hope?"

THE LADY: "Yes, or everybody *was* on Monday when I saw them. Everybody is looking very beautiful this winter, lovelier than ever, if possible. But so spiritual! *Too* spiritual! But that spirit of hers will carry her—I mean everybody, of course!—through everything. I feel almost wicked to have asked her to pour tea for me, when I think of how much else she is doing! Do you know, I was just ordering the flowers for my Saturday, and I had decided to take her for my key-note in the decorations. But that made it so difficult! There doesn't seem anything delicate and pure and sweet enough for her. There ought to be some flower created just to express her! But as yet there isn't."

THE YOUNG MAN: "No, no; there isn't. But now I must run away. I haven't been

to my hotel yet; I was just driving up from the ship, and I saw the flowers in the window, and—stopped. Good-bye!"

THE LADY: "Good-bye! What devotion to somebody—everybody! Don't forget my Saturday!"

THE YOUNG MAN: "No, no; I won't. Good-bye!" He hurries out of the door, and his carriage is heard driving away.

THE FLORIST: "I wondter if he but the attress on the cart? No; there is noding!" He turns the card helplessly over. "What am I coing to do about these flowers?"

THE LADY: "Why, didn't he say where to send them?"

THE FLORIST: "No, he rhon away and dtidn't leaf the attress."

THE LADY: "That was *my* fault! I confused him, poor fellow, by talking to him. What are you going to do?"

THE FLORIST: "That is what I lige to know! Do you know what hotel he stobs at?"

THE LADY: "No, he didn't say. I have no idea where he is going. But wait a moment! I think I know where he meant to send the flowers."

THE FLORIST: "Oh, well; that is all I want to know."

THE LADY: "Yes, but I am not certain."

After a moment's thought. "I know he wants them to go at once: a great deal may depend upon it—everything." Suddenly! "Could you let me see that card?"

THE FLORIST, throwing it on the counter before her: "Why, soddonly; if he is a frhiendt of yours—"

THE LADY, shrinking back: "Ah, it isn't so simple! That makes it all the worse. It would be a kind of sacrilege! I have no right— Or, wait! I will just glance at the first word. It may be a clue. And I want you to bear me witness, Mr. Eichenlaub, that I didn't read a word more." She catches up a piece of paper, and covers all the card except the first two words. "Yes! It is she! Oh, how perfectly delightful! It 's charming, charming! It 's one of the prettiest things that ever happened! And I shall be the means—no, not the means, quite, but the accident—of bringing them together! Put the card into the box, Mr. Eichenlaub, and don't let me see it an instant longer, or I shall read every word of it, in spite of myself!" She gives him the card, and turns, swiftly, and makes some paces towards the door.

THE FLORIST, calling after her: "But the attress, matam. You forgot."

THE LADY, returning: "Oh yes! Give me your pencil." She writes on a piece of white wrapping-paper. "There! That is it." She stands irresolute, with the pencil at her lip. "There was something else that I seem to have forgotten."

THE FLORIST: "Your flowers?"

THE LADY: "Oh yes, my flowers. I nearly went away without deciding. Let me see. Where are those white roses with the pink tinge on the edge of the petals?" THE FLORIST pushes the box towards her, and she looks down at the roses. "No, they won't do. They look somehow—cruel! I don't wonder he wouldn't have them. They are totally out of character. I will take those white Bride Roses, too. It seems a fatality, but there really isn't anything else, and I can laugh with her about them, if it all turns out well." She talks to herself rather than the FLORIST, who stands patient behind the counter, and repeats, dreamily, "Laugh with her!"

THE FLORIST: "How many shall I sendt you, matam?"

THE LADY: "Oh, loads. As many as you think I ought to have. I shall not have any other flowers, and I mean to toss them on the table in loose heaps. Perhaps I

shall have some smilax to go with them."

THE FLORIST: "Yes: or cypress wine."

THE LADY: "No; that is too crapy and creepy. Smilax, or nothing; and yet I don't like that hard, shiny, varnishy look of smilax either. You wouldn't possibly have anything like that wild vine, it's scarcely more than a golden thread, that trails over the wayside bushes in New England? Dodder, they call it."

THE FLORIST: "I nefer heardt off it."

THE LADY: "No, but that would have been just the thing. It suggests the colour of her hair; it would go with her. Well, I will have the smilax too, though I don't like it. I don't see why all the flowers should take to being so inexpressive. Send all the smilax you judge best. It's quite a long table, nine or ten feet, and I want the vine going pretty much all about it."

THE FLORIST: "Perhaps I better sendt somebody to see?"

THE LADY: "Yes, that would be the best. Good morning."

THE FLORIST: "Goodt morning, matam. I will sendt rhoundt this afternoon."

THE LADY: "Very well." She is at the door, and she is about to open it, when it is

opened from the outside, and another lady, deeply veiled, presses hurriedly in, and passes down the shop to the counter, where THE FLORIST stands sorting the long-stemmed Bride Roses in the box before him. THE FIRST LADY does not go out; she lingers at the door, looking after the lady who has just come in; then, with a little hesitation, she slowly returns, as if she had forgotten something, and waits by the stove until THE FLORIST shall have attended to the new-comer.

THE SECOND LADY, throwing back her veil, and bending over to look at the box of roses: "What beautiful roses! What do you call these?"

THE FLORIST: "That is a new rhoce: the Pridte. It is jost oudt. It is coing to be a very bopular rhoce."

THE SECOND LADY: "How very white it is! It seems not to have the least touch of colour in it! Like snow! No; it is too cold!"

THE FLORIST: "It *iss* gold-looging."

THE SECOND LADY: "What do they use this rose for? For—for—"

THE FLORIST: "For everything! Wed-dtings, theatre barties, afternoon dteas, dtinners, funerals—"

THE SECOND LADY: "Ah, that is shocking! I can't have it, then. I want to send some flowers to a friend who has lost her only child—a young girl—and I wish it to be something expressive—characteristic—something that won't wound them with other associations. Have you nothing—nothing of that kind? I want something that shall be significant; something that shall be like a young girl, and yet— Haven't you some very tall, slender, delicate flowers? Not this deathly white, but with a little colour in it? Isn't there some kind of lily?"

THE FLORIST: "Easder lilies? Lily-off-the-valley? Chonquils? Azaleas? Hyacints? Marcuerites?"

THE SECOND LADY: "No, no; they won't do, any of them! Haven't you any other kind of roses, that won't be so terribly—terribly—" She looks round over the shelves and the windows banked with flowers.

THE FLORIST: "Yes, we haf dtea-rhoces, all kindts; Marshal Niel; Matame Waterville and Matame Cousine—these pink ones; they are sister rhoces; Matame Hoste, this plack one; the Midio, here; Chacks—"

THE SECOND LADY: "No, no! They

won't any of them do. There ought to be a flower invented that would say something—pity, sympathy—that wouldn't hurt more than it helped. Isn't there anything? Some flowering vine?"

THE FLORIST: "Here is the chasmin. That is a very peautiful wine, with that sdtar-shaped flower, and the berfume—"

THE SECOND LADY, looking at a length of the jasmine vine which he trails on the counter before her: "Yes, that is very beautiful; and it is girlish, and like— But no, it wouldn't do! That perfume is heart-breaking! Don't send that!"

THE FLORIST, patiently: "Cypress wine? smilax?"

THE SECOND LADY, shaking her head vaguely: "Some other flowering vine."

THE FLORIST: "Well, we have cot noding in, at present. I coult get you some of that other chasmin—kindt of push, that gifs its berfume after dtark—"

THE SECOND LADY: "At night? Yes, I know. That might do. But those pale green flowers, that are not like flowers—no, they wouldn't do! I shall have to come back to your Pride Roses! Why do they call it Pride?"

THE FLORIST: "It is Pridte, not Bridte, matam."

THE SECOND LADY, with mystification: "Oh! Well, let me have a great many of them. Have you plenty?"

THE FLORIST: "As many as you lige."

THE SECOND LADY: "Well, I don't want any of these hard little buds. I want very long stems, and slender, with the flowers fully open, and fragile-looking—something like *her*." THE FIRST LADY starts. "Yes: like this—and this—and this. Be sure you get them all like these. And send them—I will give you the address." She writes on a piece of the paper before her. "There, that is it. Here is my card. I want it to go with them." She turns from THE FLORIST with a sigh, and presses her handkerchief to her eyes.

THE FLORIST: "You want them to go rhighdt away?" He takes up the card, and looks at it absently, and then puts it down, and examines the roses one after another. "I don't know whether I cot enough of these oben ones on handt, already—"

THE SECOND LADY: "Oh, you mustn't send them to-day! I forgot. It isn't to be till to-morrow. You must send them in

the morning. But I am going out of town to-day, and so I came in to order them now. Be very careful not to send them to-day!"

THE FLORIST: "All rhighdt. I loog oudt."

THE SECOND LADY: "I am so glad you happened to ask me. It has all been so dreadfully sudden, and I am quite bewildered. Let me think if there is anything more!" As she stands with her finger to her lip, THE FIRST LADY makes a movement as if to speak, but does not say anything. "No, there is nothing more, I believe."

THE FLORIST, to THE FIRST LADY: "Was there somet'ing?"

THE FIRST LADY: "No. There is no hurry."

THE SECOND LADY, turning towards her: "Oh, I beg your pardon! I have been keeping you—"

THE FIRST LADY: "Not at all. I merely returned to— But it isn't of the least consequence. Don't let me hurry you!"

THE SECOND LADY: "Oh, I have quite finished, I believe. But I can hardly realise anything, and I was afraid of going away and forgetting something, for I am on my way to the station. My husband is very

ill and I am going South with him; and this has been so sudden, so terribly unexpected. The only daughter of a friend—"

THE FIRST LADY: "The only—"

THE SECOND LADY: "Yes, it is too much! But perhaps you have come—I ought to have thought of it; you may have come on the same kind of sad errand yourself; you will know how to excuse—"

THE FIRST LADY, with a certain resentment: "Not at all! I was just ordering some flowers for a reception."

THE SECOND LADY: "Oh! Then I beg your pardon! But there seems nothing else in the world but—death. I am very sorry. I beg your pardon!" She hastens out of the shop, and THE FIRST LADY remains, looking a moment at the door after she has vanished. Then she goes slowly to the counter.

THE LADY, severely: "Mr. Eichenlaub, I have changed my mind about the roses and the smilax. I will not have either. I want you to send me all of that jasmine vine that you can get. I will have my whole decorations of that. I wonder I didn't think of that before. Mr. Eichenlaub!" She hesitates. "Who was that lady?"

THE FLORIST, looking about among the loose papers before him: "Why, I dton't know. I cot her cart here, somewhere."

THE LADY, very nervously: "Never mind about the card! I don't wish to know who she was. I have no right to ask. No! I won't look at it." She refuses the card, which he has found, and which he offers to her. "I don't care for her name, but—where was she sending the flowers?"

THE FLORIST, tossing about the sheets of paper on the counter: "She dtidn't say, but she wrhote it down here, somewhere—"

THE LADY, shrinking back: "No, no! I don't want to see it! But what right had she to ask me such a thing as that? It was very bad taste; very obtuse,—whoever she was. Have you—ah—found it?"

THE FLORIST, offering her a paper across the counter: "Yes; here it iss."

THE LADY, catching it from him, and then, after a glance at it, starting back with a shriek: "Ah-h-h! How terrible! But it can't be! Oh, I don't know what to think— It is the most dreadful thing that ever— It's impossible!" She glances at the paper again, and breaks into a hysterical laugh: "Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha!" Why, this is the address that I wrote out for that

young gentleman's flowers! You have made a terrible mistake, Mr. Eichenlaub—you have almost killed me. I thought—I thought that woman was sending her funeral flowers to—to—" She holds her hand over her heart and sinks into the chair beside the counter, where she lets fall the paper. "You have almost killed me."

THE FLORIST: "I am very sorry. I dtidn't subbose— But the oder attress must be here. I will fint it—" He begins tossing the papers about again.

THE LADY, springing to her feet: "No, no! I wouldn't look at it now for the world! I have had *one* escape. Send me all jasmine, remember."

THE FLORIST: "Yes, all chasmin." THE LADY goes slowly and absently toward the door, where she stops, and then she turns and goes back slowly, and as if forcing herself.

THE LADY: "Mr. Eichenlaub."

THE FLORIST: "Yes, matam."

THE LADY: "Have you—plenty—of those white—Bride Roses?"

THE FLORIST: "I get all you want of them."

THE LADY: "Open, fragile-looking ones, with long, slender stems?"

THE FLORIST: "I get you any kindt you lige!"

THE LADY: "Send me Bride Roses, then. I don't care! I will not be frightened out of them! It is too foolish."

THE FLORIST: "All rhighdt. How many do you think you want?"

THE LADY: "Send all you like! Masses of them! Heaps!"

THE FLORIST: "All rhighdt. And the chasmin?"

THE LADY: "No; I don't want it now."

THE FLORIST: "You want the smilax with them, then, I subbose?"

THE LADY: "No, I don't want any smilax with them, either. Nothing but those white Bride Roses!" She turns and goes to the door; she calls back, "Nothing but the roses, remember!"

THE FLORIST: All rhighdt. I don't forget. No chasmin; no smilax; no kindt of wine. Only Pridte Rhoces!"

THE LADY: "Only roses."

THE FLORIST, alone, thoughtfully turning over the paper on his counter: "That is sdrainche that I mage that mistake about the attress! I can't find the oder one anwhere; and if I lost it, what am I coing to do with the rhoces the other lady ortert?"

He steps back and looks at his feet, and then stoops and picks up a paper, which he examines. "Ach! Here it iss! Zlipped down behindt. Now I don't want to get it mixed with that other any more. He puts it down at the left, and takes up the address for the young man's roses on the right; he stares at the two addresses in a stupefaction. "That is very sdrainche too. Well!" He drops the papers with a shrug, and goes on arranging the flowers.

AN INDIAN GIVER

I

MRS. LILLIAN INGLEHART AND MISS ROBERTA LAWRENCE

MRS. INGLEHART: "My dear! I will not hear another word. He is *yours*! The idea of making such a fuss about a little thing like the gift of a young man!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "It 's only that I was afraid you might want him yourself, Mrs. Inglehart. It would make me unhappy if I thought you had deprived yourself of a cousin you might regret. They don't grow on every bush, I believe."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Such as Jim don't, I'll admit. But I hope I know the duties of a hostess, and the first of them is to get a young lady visitor engaged if possible. You 've never seen Jim, have you?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Never. What's he like?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Are you very fond of tall men?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Is he tall?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Not so very. I should say he had more breadth and thickness than length."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, I like them broad and thick."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Do you?" She speaks with a certain intonation of misgiving, and then she has the effect of pulling herself together: "Do you like them brown-complexioned and dark-eyed?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Is *he* brown-complexioned and dark-eyed?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "He's brown-complexioned and blue-eyed."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, that sort of contradiction is adorable. The blue eyes always have such a funny look in the dark face. I shall like him, I know. When's he coming?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Any moment, now."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh!" She jumps to her feet. MRS. INGLEHART remains seated, but leans forward to look in through the door at the clock in the hall, from the

verandah where, with a pretence of sewing in her lap, she is talking with her guest. To the right of this hall the windows of a wide drawing-room open to the floor, and people come and go through them as if they were doors. From the verandah, which extends around three sides of the house, broad steps descend to a driveway curving in front of it. Beyond the road green lawns, wept over by drooping white birches, slope to the red rocks that keep MRS. INGLEHART'S place from the sea.

MRS. INGLEHART: "Or not *moment*, exactly. He promised to be here by the half-past four, but he probably won't come till the five-ten; it's only four now."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Time enough to prink, then." She sinks back into her chair, provisionally. "Is Mr. Fairford punctilious about prinking?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I see you would dread that."

MISS LAWRENCE: "I don't know that I should. They have to have *some* fault."

MRS. INGLEHART: "And you think that is a fault?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I can't say I do. Do you?"

MRS. INGLEHART, with an air of great

candour: "To tell you the truth, I don't believe Jim cares about women's dress."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then he is the most dangerous kind. He'll not see anything, but he'll feel everything. I shall have to dress at his nerves."

MRS. INGLEHART: "It's clear that you've made your observations, my dear."

MISS LAWRENCE: "By twenty-six, one has."

MRS. INGLEHART: "I should never have dreamt twenty-six."

MISS LAWRENCE: "I haven't dreamt it myself. In my dreams I'm still sixteen. It's only in my waking moments that I'm twenty-six."

MRS. INGLEHART, thoughtfully: "You have courage."

MISS LAWRENCE: "I have conviction. It's best to be honest—unless the man prefers lies."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Don't they all?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Nearly all. But if Mr. Fairford should happen to be the exception that doesn't, will you please tell him I *owned* to twenty-six, but you don't *know* how much older I really am?"

MRS. INGLEHART, with open admiration and covert alarm: "You're a strange girl!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Will that scare him? Should you advise me to be less strange?"

MRS. INGLEHART, with a sigh: "No; he will like you so."

MISS LAWRENCE, laughing: "What despair! Poor Mrs. Inglehart! You're sorry already you gave him to me! Well, you may have him back."

MRS. INGLEHART, with noble constancy: "No, no; you're the very one for him."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then our only hope is that he isn't the one for me."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You think I'm not in earnest. Well, then, the only thing left is to convince you by practical—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Demonstration? I don't see how it can be done. You can't pass this young man along to me without consulting his inclinations. Has he very decided inclinations?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Yes, he has. That was the trouble, I suppose."

MISS LAWRENCE: "So there *was* trouble." She smiles intelligently.

MRS. INGLEHART: "It was a great while ago. It was before I was—there was any—Mrs. Inglehart. And there would be the

same trouble again, if I were not—there were not any—Mrs. Inglehart. So it's best to have it over before it begins."

Miss Lawrence: "I see what you mean. He's one of those terrible creatures who know their own minds; or think they do; and—may I be a little critical of your gift? I know it seems ungracious!"

Mrs. Inglehart: "Not in the least. People change their wedding-presents, even."

Miss Lawrence: "I shouldn't wish to change the present; only the name: Jim! If it were only Jack, now, I should know what to do. The Jacks are all alike. They smoke, they flirt desperately, but they are very warm-hearted, and conceal a great deal of sentiment under the mask of cynicism—like Thackeray's men. They would do anything for you—at least any little thing like jumping overboard from a yacht to fish your hat up, or marrying a girl that you've found out is in love with them, and you think they ought, though you're dying for them yourself. You can twist them round your fingers; but it must be different with Jims. Jim! It suggests something rather grim; perhaps it's because it rhymes with it. Jim! I should say

one's little arts, one's little airs and graces, would be thrown away on Jim. He sounds like a person of convictions: he sounds like a person of opinions, too, and very stiff ones. I suspect that Jim is serious, and he likes seriousness in women. He has ideas of home and a wife, and of being master in his own house. All that could be easily taken out of him if he were Jack, of course; but being Jim, it couldn't. He 's masterful; I feel that he 's masterful. He has all sorts of preconceived notions. He would be very domestic, and intellectual, and he would rather read to you than talk to you. He would want to respect you, and if you wouldn't let him, he would—make it hot for you. Yes, I know the type: adoring, domineering, devoted, and utterly intolerable."

Mrs. Inglehart, who has been leaning forward more and more, and edging almost out of her chair, in her intentness: "You 've met him! You know him! You 've been letting me give myself away!"

Miss Lawrence: "Mr. Fairford? You? I? You 've given *him* away, but not yourself, at least to me, Mrs. Inglehart. I never saw Mr. Fairford in my life. I never heard of him till I came here."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Then I don't know but it's worse, for you've guessed him. How you must dread the idea of him!"

MISS LAWRENCE, thoughtfully: "I don't know. I rather like the notion of grappling with such a—problem. It would be fun to get the better of it."

MRS. INGLEHART: "And if you got the worse?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I don't believe I should get the worse. But now, really, hadn't I better go and prink, Mrs. Inglehart? I don't believe Jim would like to find me unprepared."

MRS. INGLEHART: "No. Go and prink."

MISS LAWRENCE, going in through the open door: "If he should happen to come before I get down, I know I can trust him with you, Mrs. Inglehart." She vanishes, with a smile over her shoulder at MRS. INGLEHART, who remains silent and motionless, apparently insensible of her withdrawal, though she keeps a mechanical smile of parting on her face. Her mother enters from the door that MISS LAWRENCE has passed through.

II

MRS. WENHAM ; MRS. INGLEHART

MRS. WENHAM: "When do you expect James, Lilly?"

MRS. INGLEHART, with a deep sigh: "Oh, any time, now. He said he would be here at half-past four."

MRS. WENHAM: "Then he'll *be* here at half-past four."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Yes, I suppose he will,—with his tiresome punctuality."

MRS. WENHAM: "Tiresome? If there is one thing more than another that I like in James Fairford, it *is* his punctuality. It's something that I can thoroughly sympathise with him in. If it had not been for *my* habits of punctuality, where would you have been at this moment, Lillian?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Perhaps not born. But now don't preach, mother. Advise. You'll like it almost as well."

MRS. WENHAM, looking doubtful, but as if assenting for argument's sake: "Well?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "What do you think of Miss Lawrence?"

MRS. WENHAM: "What do you mean by thinking? If you've been behaving

foolishly in any way, and want me to help you out of it by blaming Miss Lawrence—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Blame? Who's talking of blame? I simply wish to know if you don't think she's something of a cat."

MRS. WENHAM: "Cat? How, cat?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I mean very purring, and sly, and velvety."

MRS. WENHAM: "No, not at all."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Well, then, very sharp and clawy."

MRS. WENHAM: "What have you been doing, Lillian?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Nothing. I've been *un*doing. How do you think she and Jim will like each other?"

MRS. WENHAM: "What difference how they like each other?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "One doesn't want one's guests to be at swords' points."

MRS. WENHAM: "I don't know why you asked her when you knew he was coming."

MRS. INGLEHART: "I'm sure they'll like each other. He'll respect her. I respect her myself. She has a great deal of character, and all that; but I think there's a vein of coarseness in her. Yes, she *is* coarse. She has a bold way of talking

about men. It may be very modern, and the rest of it, but I don't like it, and I don't think it's nice."

MRS. WENHAM: "What men has she been talking about?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh,—none."

MRS. WENHAM: "What has she been saying about them?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh,—nothing. But girls seem to say anything, nowadays. Especially old ones! How old am I, mother?"

MRS. WENHAM: "You're twenty-seven. You know that well enough."

MRS. INGLEHART: "And she's twenty-six, and looks every day of it." Vaguely, after a moment: "I'm sure *I* don't know how I came to ask her here."

MRS. WENHAM: "Why do you say that, *now*? Have you been making a fool of yourself, Lilly?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I *won't* be scolded in my own house, mother!"

MRS. WENHAM: "Very well, if you call it scolding." MRS. WENHAM sits very erect in her chair, and gathers all her dignity about her; MRS. INGLEHART rocks to and fro in a reckless and distraught manner. "May I ask a simple question?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I suppose so."

MRS. WENHAM: "Are you going to accept James?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "What an idea! No!"

MRS. WENHAM: "Then, if it isn't scolding, allow me to say that he will have a right to feel trifled with. Your letting him come here, after what's past, is tantamount to your saying you would marry him if he asked you—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Very well, I'll keep him from asking me, then. There are ways of staving men off."

MRS. WENHAM: "Not such men as James Langton Fairford. You haven't forgotten how he behaved when you tried it before—before your marriage."

MRS. INGLEHART: "That was a great while ago. I considered him a mere boy, and he might have known it."

MRS. WENHAM: "He was two years older than you."

MRS. INGLEHART: "And how old was I, pray? Nineteen! A perfect chit! That proves that he was a boy. And he was very rude. If he had been a little more—thoughtful, and patient! You know how it was, mother. After Jim's outrageous

conduct, I had no alternative but to marry Mr. Inglehart; and I am not going to have it said, now, after all I've been through on his account, that I was in love with him all along, and married him the minute I decently could. I trust I have too much regard for Mr. Inglehart's memory for *that.*"

MRS. WENHAM: "Then allow me to say, my dear, without scolding, that I don't know what you 're after."

MRS. INGLEHART: "I'm not after anything, if you prefer such a common expression. It's Jim that's after me; and I shall not feel in the least bound to be overtaken. I have other plans for him."

MRS. WENHAM: "Other plans?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "He may fancy Roberta Lawrence. I'm sure I don't see what men find in her, all of them. But if it's frankness as they call it, I wish them joy of it. Of all the detestable hypocrites in *this* world commend me to a frank woman. Why, it's nothing but mask upon mask, all the way through!"

MRS. WENHAM: "Is that why you are so down upon the poor girl?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Down upon her? Well, yes; it may be hate to throw such a

husband as Jim Fairford in her way. At any rate, I 've set my heart upon making a match between them. That will let me out and it will be such fun." She expresses her exultation in rather a lugubrious note of laughter, and tries to escape the severe gaze which her mother fixes upon her.

MRS. WENHAM: "Just one word, Lillian Inglehart! Does Miss Lawrence know anything of this fine scheme?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "No. That is, I have put it out of my power to accept Jim Fairford by telling Roberta Lawrence she may have him if she can get him. If she does, or can, that 's the end of it; and it 's the end of it anyway."

MRS. WENHAM: "Well, Lillian, if you are in earnest in what you say, you are certainly the greatest fool— But perhaps you consider this scolding?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Not at all. I call it reasoning. Go on."

MRS. WENHAM: "Oh, I 've nothing more to say. But if you have really told the girl—if you have put this idea into her head, you have done a wrong and wicked thing, and you 'll have to answer for the consequences. It would be no more than you deserve if James *did* take a fancy to

her, and I hope he will; and if you have a spark of generosity in your composition, you at least won't try to prejudice him against her."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You have such a low opinion of me, mother, that I wonder you associate with me at all. But now I 'm going to wring your bosom by an act of the most exemplary magnanimity you ever heard of. A splendid idea has just occurred to me. I 'm going to send Roberta down to see Jim first and receive him. She 's upstairs now, prinking, and I 'm going straight to my room, and I 'm going to be so slow getting ready that she 'll have to go down, and she can have him all to herself for a first impression; and a girl of twenty-six knows how to make hay while the sun shines. *Now* what do you say?"

MRS. WENHAM, going in: "Humph!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You don't believe I 'll do it?"

MRS. WENHAM: "I *know* you won't."

MRS. INGLEHART, calling after her: "Well, I 'm so glad you approve of the idea, mother. I only wish you could see how expressive your back looks, as you disappear in the distance. It 's everything that 's appreciative and flattering." As

MRS. WENHAM vanishes: "Well, I don't care." In the course of her two dialogues a great many sewing materials and appliances have dropped about MRS. INGLEHART on the floor; as she now rises, her scissors fall out of her lap, and as she stoops to pick them up, she is reminded of the other things. "What a bother!" When she has got them all in her lap again, she turns to the door, but is arrested by the sound of a quick, decided footfall on the steps of the verandah. She looks round over her shoulder, and in this very pretty and engaging attitude she meets the blue eyes flashing out of the brown face of JAMES FAIRFORD. He has a robust hand-bag in one hand and an umbrella in the other; over his arm hangs a light overcoat. He is dressed in summer stuffs, but in no concession to the negligence of summer fashion; his shirt is white; his firm legs are cased in trousers that descend to his black shoes; his whole keeping is that of a man who despises the appearance of recreation, and puts business before pleasure. "James!" MRS. INGLEHART'S exclamation expresses mingled pleasure, surprise, and dismay. She drops all the things out of her lap again. "What are you doing here at this unearthly hour?

You said you would be here at half-past four!" She sinks back into her chair.

III

FAIRFORD AND MRS. INGLEHART; WITH MOMENTS OF MISS LAWRENCE

FAIRFORD: "It's half-past four now." He sits heavily down in one of the verandah chairs, plants his bag before him, and then pushes it away with his foot, while he mops his forehead with his handkerchief.

MRS. INGLEHART: "Did you walk?"

FAIRFORD: "Do I seem to have driven? And in what?"

MRS. INGLEHART, hiding a smile with her hand: "I wonder how you found the way."

FAIRFORD: "They told me at the station."

MRS. INGLEHART, gracefully sinking into a chair: "Did they tell you that if it hadn't been for your ridiculous punctuality you'd have been met at the train? Now you see what comes of being on time!"

FAIRFORD: "I dare say they would if they could have spared a moment from the celebration of your charms and virtues. You seem to have cast your confounded glamour over the neighbourhood, as usual."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Yes, it's new to me. It must have been the telegraph girl!"

FAIRFORD: "There was a girl, and there was a telegraph. I didn't see them in combination."

MRS. INGLEHART: "They were one, all the same. Yes, I may say she's quite an ardent admirer."

FAIRFORD: "So am I, Lillian."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh yes. But you mustn't say it. I hope you weren't rude to the poor girl on that account?"

FAIRFORD: "Why mustn't I say it? I've come here to say it!"

MRS. INGLEHART, to gain time: "But you've said it before—and you ought to be a little more diversified in your remarks."

FAIRFORD, getting to his feet: "Lillian, how can you trifle with me so? Surely you know what I must understand—must hope—from your allowing me to come here to-day?" He starts toward her and stumbles over his bag; he kicks the bag: MRS. INGLEHART laughs. "Oh, laugh at me, make a fool of me!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You know you don't approve of me, Jim; you know you don't."

FAIRFORD: "I believe you can make me

approve of you if you choose. And if you don't choose, I want you anyway."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh! Do you think that 's very logical?"

FAIRFORD, bitterly: "No, I 'm not proud of it. As you say, it isn't logical; it isn't reasonable; but I always wanted you; I wanted you long ago, before you were married."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Why do people say you don't know how to flatter? I 'm sure it 's enough to turn *my* poor head to have a man say he isn't proud of caring for me, but he keeps on doing it regardless of consequences."

FAIRFORD: "You know what I mean. I never pretended that you were my ideal in character, but—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I thought it was customary to tell the lady that she *was* your ideal. That 's what they always tell *me*!"

FAIRFORD: "I don't care what other people tell you. *I* tell you the truth; and I tell you that you are *not* my ideal."

MRS. INGLEHART: "What am I, then, if I 'm not your ideal?"

FAIRFORD: "You 're—you 're my love. But you know that."

MRS. INGLEHART: "I've heard you say so. But I'm not sure that I know it."

FAIRFORD: "Not sure!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You may not be sure of your own mind."

FAIRFORD: "This is trifling, Lillian. What do you say to me?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "What can I say till I'm convinced you're in earnest?"

FAIRFORD: "And what will convince you? It seems to me that it's proof enough of my sincerity that I'm here to offer myself to you and to ask you to be my wife. Didn't you know that I was coming to do that? What else do you expect? Do you want me to say that you *are* my ideal, that you are everything in nature and character that I have dreamed of, and that I would not have you different?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You might try it. I don't know what effect it would have."

FAIRFORD: "You wish me to minister to your vanity, to fill your head with nonsense. Well, I will never do it!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Then I don't see how it's going to end. You might at least say you believe I could *become* your ideal."

FAIRFORD: "But if I don't believe you

could, and therefore I renounce my ideal; if I throw it away, and I tell you that you, whatever you are, are a thousand times dearer than anything I've ever imagined? And yet you might be all that I've ever dreamed of in woman, prompt, energetic, constant in purpose, with a high sense of duty, a devotion to noble—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Another James Fairford. What egotism? Yes, I could easily be all that, if I wanted to. The trouble is I couldn't want to."

FAIRFORD: "I know it, and I don't ask it of you. I ask you merely to be yourself, —and to be mine."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Do you think that's so little, that you say *merely*? Asking a woman to be herself and to be yours is asking everything."

FAIRFORD: "Then don't be yourself; don't be anything but mine."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Now you are beginning to talk sense—"

FAIRFORD, starting toward her: "And you consent—you—" A sound as of a lifting window above the verandah roof is heard, and then, after a moment, the voice of MISS ROBERTA LAWRENCE.

MISS LAWRENCE: "Mrs. Inglehart!"

MRS. INGLEHART, in a low key to FAIRFORD: "Oh, good gracious, I forgot all about her! *Now* what am I to do?" In a high key to MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes?"

MISS LAWRENCE, with a nervous laugh: "Oh, it *is* you. I thought, I wasn't sure it was you I heard. What time is it, please?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "It's a little after four—a quarter—twenty minutes—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then there's time, yet." There is a sound of a closing window.

FAIRFORD: "Why did you say that, Lillian? You know it's twenty minutes of five."

MRS. INGLEHART: "That's a very charming girl, Jim — a Miss Roberta Lawrence. I want you to meet her. But perhaps you have met her already—"

FAIRFORD: "No; but that isn't the point. Why did you say twenty minutes? I wish you hadn't, dear!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Well, it *is* twenty minutes — and more, too; it's twenty minutes of five. You said so yourself. Now don't tease, but go and prettify. That's what *she's* doing—" The sound

of the lifting window is heard again, and then the voice of MISS LAWRENCE.

MISS LAWRENCE: "Mrs. Inglehart! Are you still there?"

MRS. INGLEHART, in a high key: "Yes!" In a low key to FAIRFORD: "Now you must go! It's a shame for you to stay here eavesdropping. And making me, too; and you so conscientious! 'Sh!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I'm in something of a dilemma. I don't know whether it had better be the green, or the blue."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh—the blue, dear; or no, the green—blue, I mean." In a low key to FAIRFORD: "Now you have spoilt everything, and disgraced me before my guest. I can never forgive you!"

FAIRFORD: "How have I done that? She has said nothing that compromises either of you—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You've let her give herself away. You know that it's for you she's choosing between blue and green."

FAIRFORD: "Bless my soul, how should I know such a thing?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Don't you suppose I told her you were coming? And when she comes down and finds you here you

won't be capable of seeming to have come just that instant."

FAIRFORD: "If she asks—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "As if she would ask! She is too high-spirited, too noble-minded to go prying about; but it will kill her, all the same. You don't know how a girl like Roberta Lawrence, so frank herself, and so unsuspicious, will take such a thing. Of course, if it was I, I could laugh it off; but she will think that I did it purposely; she won't show it, but she will never believe that I was as innocent as she was in the matter."

FAIRFORD: "It seems to me you 're not painting a very frank and unsuspicious character."

MRS. INGLEHART: "I mean I should in her place. You know what I mean. But if you prefer to vex me— She 'll be asking something else in another minute!"

FAIRFORD: "What do you want me to do?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You must *think* what I want you to do. You have got me into this trouble, by your ridiculous promptness, and you must get me out."

FAIRFORD: "Then let me go to my room, and I can't overhear anything more."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, you think it 's so simple as that, do you? Wait a minute—I have it! You must go away! And you must come back in about ten minutes or so, as if you hadn't been here at all. And you must apologise for being late; say you missed the train, or something like that, and—"

FAIRFORD, sitting doggedly down: "No, I can't do anything of the kind."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You can't?"

FAIRFORD: "Well, then, I won't. It would be acting a lie."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You accuse me of wishing you to lie."

FAIRFORD: "I don't think you do it knowingly. But, Lillian, you must see—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "'Sh! There, she 's putting up her window again!"

MISS LAWRENCE, from her window: "I've decided not to dress at him, Mrs. Inglehart. I am going to be perfectly passive, and let fate take its course. I 'm going to wear my silver-grey."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Perfect!" In a low tone to FAIRFORD, desperately: "It 's too late for you to go away now. You might as well stay!"

FAIRFORD: "But I don't understand.

Why should Miss Lawrence dress at me? Have *you* dressed at me, Lillian? You look heavenly in that—thing you've got on; I don't know what it is."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, much pleasure your compliments give me, when I know what a cold, hollow heart they come from! I may dress for you, but you won't gratify me in the smallest thing. Suppose your going away *does* have the appearance of deceit? Is a mere *appearance* so very killing, when it's for such a good object? Oh, Jim! Do help me out! Think of the poor girl's feelings, if she comes down and finds you here! She'll *know* you overheard her. If you really cared for me—"

FAIRFORD, rising with a groan, and gathering his bag up for going: "And if I go—if I do this against my reason and conscience, what shall you do with me when I come back?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You'll be so interested in Miss Lawrence you won't care."

FAIRFORD: "That won't do, Lillian. I shall want my answer when I come back. Will you promise it?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "It's very mean of you to make conditions! I'll *listen* to you. But I won't even do that if you stay. And

if you think I'm asking you to act a lie, just think what a lie you've been making *me* act."

FAIRFORD: "I? How?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "By letting me see you before you saw her, when I promised mamma I wouldn't."

FAIRFORD: "But why did you promise that? What—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "That has nothing to do with it. A promise is a promise, and sacred. Will you go? And when you come back, and find Miss Lawrence here, will you ask after me as if you hadn't met me?"

FAIRFORD: "No, certainly not. I can't carry the deceit as far as that."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Not to enable me to keep my promise? Very well, then, that shows that you don't trust me, and if you don't trust me, you can't care for me."

FAIRFORD: "I don't trust you in the least, and I care all the world for you. For Heaven's sake, Lillian, be candid with me, for once, and tell me what all this coil is? I know that whatever you've got in your head, there's nothing but truth in your heart, and if you would only be guided by that—"

MRS. INGLEHART, apparently fascinated by the idea: "Well, I will. I'll tell you all about it. You see that we were talking about your coming, and I said to Roberta Lawrence— 'Sh! There 's her step! She 's coming out of her room—she 's on the stairs! Run, James, if you love me!" She pushes him towards the verandah steps, and without waiting to see him vanish round the corner of the house, she turns, and flies through the long window into the drawing-room, while MISS LAWRENCE emerges from the hall-way, and MRS. WENHAM advances from the verandah on the side of the house opposite that which has just hidden FAIRFORD from view.

IV

MISS LAWRENCE AND MRS. WENHAM

MISS LAWRENCE: "Mrs. Inglehart!" To MRS. WENHAM: "I thought Mrs. Inglehart was here!"

MRS. WENHAM: "And I thought I heard talking. But I must have dreamed it. I seem to have dozed over my book."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Perhaps you heard me calling down to her. I was consulting her about Mr. Fairford's taste in colours.

Isn't he very late?" She looks in at the clock in the hall, and MRS. WENHAM looks in too.

MRS. WENHAM: "Yes; it's nearly five, and he promised to be here at half-past four. Something must have detained him; he's usually so prompt."

MISS LAWRENCE, smiling: "Yes, terribly prompt, I believe. At least that's the impression Mrs. Inglehart gives of him." The ladies have seated themselves, and MISS LAWRENCE, reclining in her chair, indifferently studies the effect of a ring on her left hand.

MRS. WENHAM, looking at her over her glasses: "You've never met my nephew, I believe?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "No; and I've no idea how he'll like me. You know it's very important he should like me. Mrs. Inglehart has given him to me."

MRS. WENHAM, dryly: "Yes, I have been scolding Lillian for her nonsense. He is not hers to give."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh! To keep, then!"

MRS. WENHAM: "I am not so sure. Miss Lawrence, I know that you are a very frank person—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Some people say merely brutal."

MRS. WENHAM: "No matter! I feel that I can speak frankly with you. Don't trust my daughter!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "This *is* frank."

MRS. WENHAM: "She acts upon impulses that she regrets. She is in love with James Fairford, I believe, and I know that he is in love with her. He was, before she married Mr. Inglehart, and I think she was with him; but the affair never came to anything, because—because— It was Lillian's fault; she couldn't be serious with him."

MISS LAWRENCE: "And now? Has he got over wanting her to be serious, or has she become so?"

MRS. WENHAM: "Lillian will never be serious—at least not like other people; and that is why I feel it my duty to be serious with you. No one knows Lillian as I do. If she saw that any one else wanted James, she would move heaven and earth to get him herself."

MISS LAWRENCE, laughing: "Really, what you say rather inclines me to try for him. I should like to see Mrs. Inglehart moving heaven and earth."

MRS. WENHAM: "Don't, my dear! I

should simply leave the house. There isn't a thing she wouldn't do if she saw you wanted him." MISS LAWRENCE laughs more and more. "I know what nonsense she has been talking to you, and I made her promise, just to punish her, that she would let you meet him first, and have a chance to—I mean that she would be made to suffer a little for her wicked folly—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Through some finesse of mine? Wouldn't that be rather too much theatre?"

MRS. WENHAM: "Yes, I don't know what she wouldn't do in her jealousy; for she'd be frantically, blindly, madly jealous if she thought he cared for you the least bit."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Poor Mrs. Inglehart! I should like to see her jealous. It doesn't seem in character. But I'm greatly obliged to you for securing me the first innings. How do you propose to manage it?"

MRS. WENHAM: "That I shall leave entirely to Lillian. I suppose that as she's out of the way, and he's expected momentarily, she's actually keeping her word, and—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I'm sitting here to

intercept Mr. Fairford on his way into the house! Isn't it rather cold-blooded? But I don't mind! You don't think he could manage to escape me, somehow?"

MRS. WENHAM: "I shall be sitting here too; and I dare say Lillian has given directions where he's to be received."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Heroic Mrs. Inglehart! I begin to quake a little. Do you know, if I had been *she*, I should have broken my word." After a thoughtful moment: "If one were really meditating an assault upon Mr. Fairford's affections, what should you say was his weakest side, Mrs. Wenham?"

MRS. WENHAM: "James?" Proudly; "He *has* no weak side."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, I didn't say weak, I said *weakest*. Where is he least strong?"

MRS. WENHAM: "Except for his inconceivable folly in regard to Lillian, I should say that James Fairford was equally strong at all points. He is truth itself; promptitude, sincerity, justice, honour—"

MISS LAWRENCE, with a deep breath: "He *is* formidable."

MRS. WENHAM: "He despises anything like double-dealing, or prevarication, or

even evasion. He will admire *you*, Miss Lawrence."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, thank you! I begin to have my doubts." MRS. INGLEHART appears at one of the long verandah windows, and looks through them, with her hands lifted to either side of the casement. "Oh, come out, Mrs. Inglehart!"

V

MRS. INGLEHART; MISS LAWRENCE; MRS. WENHAM

MRS. INGLEHART: "It's very tempting. But I can't, and I've got to take my mother away too, and consult about some little changes in receiving Mr. Fairford. You must keep him here until I come."

MISS LAWRENCE: "I wish he were here now. If he could only see you there as you're standing now! I wish you could see yourself, and you'd agree with me that there was never anything *quite* so graceful as that pose of yours."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You must tell him about it when he does come; that will be such a nice pose for *you*."

MISS LAWRENCE, rising and bobbing a courtesy to MRS. INGLEHART in acknow-

ledgment of her little dig: "Thank you, *so* much!" To MRS. WENHAM, who joins her daughter: "And you 're actually going to leave me alone with Mr. Fairford!"

MRS. WENHAM: "You 'll be in the best of hands, my dear. Remember what I told you."

MISS LAWRENCE: "I shan't forget such a charge as that!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "A conspiracy?" She looks from one to the other; then over her shoulder, as she vanishes within: "Be sure to keep him; tell him he can't go to his room just yet."

MISS LAWRENCE, calling after her: "Oh, I 'll *keep* him." When MRS. INGLEHART and her mother are out of sight, she bows herself forward in silent laughter, and when she lifts her face out of her hands again, she confronts FAIRFORD, who is stealthily mounting the verandah steps, with a manner the reverse of his earlier brusqueness and severity. At sight of him MISS LAWRENCE springs to her feet, and comes gaily towards him with outstretched hand: "Mr. Fairford? Miss Lawrence! Mrs. Inglehart has commissioned me to welcome you in her place, and to keep you here, while she and Mrs. Wenham are taking counsel together about

your room. Won't you sit down till they come?"

VI

FAIRFORD AND MISS LAWRENCE

FAIRFORD, backing upon a chair, with his bag in his hand and his overcoat on his arm: "Thank you." He falls into the chair and stares helplessly at her.

MISS LAWRENCE: "Was your train late, or did you take a later one? You see the fame of your promptness has preceded you, and you were expected at half-past four."

FAIRFORD: "The train wasn't late; I'm late—I've been walking—"

MISS LAWRENCE, politely: "From the station!"

FAIRFORD, with a deep sigh of relief: "Yes—I walked—from the station, yes."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then that accounts for it. And it must take some time for the wayfarer who isn't personally conducted to find his way round to the entrance of Mrs. Inglehart's house. A house naturally fronts before, but if it has the sea in the rear, there's a certain temptation to front behind,

and Mrs. Inglehart's house has yielded to the temptation. Don't you think it's like her? So full of—unexpectedness!"

FAIRFORD: "Yes; very singular. Very puzzling—if you've never been here before."

MISS LAWRENCE, keenly: "And is this the first time you've been here?"

FAIRFORD: "I"—Desperately: "I've never been here before to-day."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Do you mean, never before to-day, or never to-day before?"

FAIRFORD: "I mean, never before to-day; not to-day before."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then there *is* a difference! I'm so glad; I thought there wasn't when I asked." She muses aloud: "Let me see! He has never been here before to-day; but he may have been here to-day before. Is that sense? Let me try it the other way! He has been here to-day before, but he has never been here before to-day." FAIRFORD gazes uneasily at her. "I can't make it out; but I'll ask Mrs. Inglehart when she comes; she'll know. I'll put it as a conundrum: If a gentleman has never been here before to-day, and yet has been here to-day before, when has the gentleman been here before?" FAIRFORD listens with signs of increasing terror, which

culminate in a violent start when she turns suddenly upon him: "Mr. Fairford, I'm tempted to make you a confidence! Oh—ha, ha, ha! Don't be frightened. It's only something psychical. But I have had such a strange impression in regard to you."

FAIRFORD, in alarm: "Me?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes. I wonder if I may venture to speak of it; but with your frankness—oh, all your virtues have anticipated you; every one was here promptly at half-past four!—I'm sure you'll answer me. As you came up the verandah steps, just now, I had that weird sense of its all having happened before. You have had it: every one has; but at this instant it's so vivid with me that it seems as if you must *share* it with me." Laughingly: "Do you have a been-here-before feeling too?"

FAIRFORD: "I can't say—I— May I ask what you mean?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I don't wonder you're surprised. But I'm so curious to know whether two persons could have that weird seizure at the same moment in regard to the same thing. Of course it's impossible, and I ought really to beg your pardon, but as you came up the verandah steps, just now,

it flashed upon me, 'He feels as if he had been here before.' Perhaps it was a strange look— Excuse me; I'm odiously personal. Will you please to make a remark?"

FAIRFORD: "I! A remark?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes; anything—anything to turn the conversation. I've made all the remarks up to this point. I see you don't like psychical confidences."

FAIRFORD: "Yes—I like them very much. But I wish to say—I ought to tell you—I don't know how to—" He stops and stares at her.

MISS LAWRENCE, looking down at her dress on either side of her, and twitching it: "Is there something on my gown? A beetle? A caterpillar? No?" Laughing: "A woman always thinks something's wrong with her dress when people stare. But perhaps it's only the colour? It's a very peculiar shade of grey; I've been told by flatterers that I look like a wraith in it, and you look—excuse me, really, Mr. Fairford! you look as if I *did* look like a wraith!"

FAIRFORD: "Not at all, I assure you. But I—but in regard to your psychical experience, I wish—I feel bound to say—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then you like that kind of thing! Do let me tell you another! It 's apropos of this gown, which I wish you to notice particularly, so that you can corroborate me when I tell Mrs. Inglehart." She rises, and puts it in evidence by slowly turning in front of her chair; FAIRFORD starts up, and backs away in vague alarm. "Should you have thought I put it on for you?"

FAIRFORD, gasping: "For me?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "No? Didn't you know it?" She fixes him with a piercing glance, and then sinks into her chair again, laughing, while he remains standing, aghast. "It can't be the first time that you 've been dressed at by a young lady; it 's something that 's always happening when men are expected in houses where girls are. Don't you know that?"

FAIRFORD, with relief: "I suppose—I dare say—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "But, *unless you know*, you never could imagine the rest of what I 'm going to tell you. I 've just had the most awful scare. A little while before you came, I was up in my room, which looks out over the roof of the verandah here, and I fell into a hopeless doubt between blue and

green. Which should I wear? I couldn't decide, and as I had left Mrs. Inglehart sitting here alone, I indulged myself in a little impulse. I put up my window, and asked Mrs. Inglehart which it should be, and then after I had decided, I decided over again, and put up my window to tell her so. It was this last time that I had my fright. I thought—I fancied—I dreamed—that I heard another voice just before I spoke, and that this voice was a man's voice. Of course it was impossible, in the nature of things, even if it was so, but it served, for the time being. As soon as I could I reasoned myself out of it. Mrs. Inglehart couldn't be so ungenerous—so unkind—as to let me suppose she was here alone, and even if she could, the man would have insisted upon giving me some proof of his presence, if he was a gentleman. Of course if it were the groom, or the gardener, or some workman about the place, I needn't care; and so, as I said, I reasoned myself out of it. But it was a very pretty scare while it lasted, I can assure you. I really suppose it was this that gave me that been-here-before feeling when I saw you coming up the steps. Ah, here comes Mrs. Inglehart, and I'm off duty; but please don't

speak to her of it, will you? I wish to tell her later myself. You promise?"

FAIRFORD: "Yes—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, thank you. I'll be back directly, Lilly. I've kept Mr. Fairford safely for you." She waves her hand to MRS. INGLEHART as she appears at the parlour window, and vanishes through the door into the hall.

VII

MRS. INGLEHART AND FAIRFORD

MRS. INGLEHART, coming out on the verandah: "What is it you are not to tell me?"

FAIRFORD: "Who is that, Lillian?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "It's Miss Lawrence, of course. Don't you like her?"

FAIRFORD: "Against my reason and conscience, I consented to go away and come back, in this disgraceful fashion, to spare your feelings, and hers; and the result is that I shall do neither, and that I shall not be able to hold up my head."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Why, what in the world has happened?"

FAIRFORD: "That is what I can't tell

you: that's what I promised I wouldn't tell. You can ask Miss Lawrence; I am going away."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Going away!"

FAIRFORD: "I have been placed in a thoroughly false position. To oblige you, I have consented to act a falsehood, and I have done it so badly that—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Of course you've done it badly. I expected that. But what of it? Did she get it out of you?"

FAIRFORD: "I must leave you to learn from Miss Lawrence what has passed. I have given my word, and I must keep it. Good-bye!" He bows coldly, and goes toward the verandah steps.

MRS. INGLEHART, running to intercept him: "But you are not actually going! You can't be so insane, so wicked as that!"

FAIRFORD: "You've made it impossible for me to stay. The truth must come out, and then you will see why."

MRS. INGLEHART: "But no matter how bad the truth is, you'll only make it worse by going!"

FAIRFORD: "I must be judge of that. Will you please let me pass?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Do you think this is treating me very nicely? What shall I

say to Miss Lawrence? How shall I explain? O Jim, dear! Don't be boyish! I've no doubt that as soon as I know what the trouble is, I can make it right. I might have known she would tangle you up, somehow; but it can't be bad enough to drive you from my house. Think how it will look!"

FAIRFORD: "I must leave appearances to you, hereafter; you can manage them better."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Is that what *she* said of me?"

FAIRFORD: "Lillian!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I didn't mean that, Jim; indeed I didn't. But you can't imagine how awkward it will be for me if you go; what a false position it will place *me* in. Don't be selfish! Don't go. *I ask you to stay.*" She looks at him significantly.

FAIRFORD: "It's too late. I'd have given the world to hear that from you a little while ago; but now—" He falters.

MRS. INGLEHART: "Very well; go, then! *I* know what the trouble is. She knew that you had been here before, and she could only have done it by eavesdropping."

FAIRFORD: "No, Lillian; it was we who were eavesdropping."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Then it's not eavesdropping to listen from a window, but it is from a verandah? She heard every word we were saying here, and her calling down to me was a mere ruse. I might have known it at the time. But, of course, if you think I was capable of eavesdropping and she wasn't, that settles the matter, and I have no more to say. Don't let me keep you, Mr. Fairford." She suddenly bursts into tears, and catching her handkerchief to her face, flies through the window and vanishes, at the same moment that MRS. WENHAM appears at the hall-way door.

VIII

MRS. WENHAM AND FAIRFORD

MRS. WENHAM, coming forward to where FAIRFORD remains standing motionless, bag in hand: "Why, James! You've got here at last. What in the world kept you? Have you just come?"

FAIRFORD: "I'm just going."

MRS. WENHAM: "Going? Without seeing Lillian?"

FAIRFORD: "I have seen her, and—that's why I'm going."

MRS. WENHAM: "She isn't sending you away!"

FAIRFORD: "No, no! Not in that sense of the word. We've quarrelled. Aunt Harriet, I wish to tell you—"

MRS. WENHAM: "Oh, you needn't tell me! I know what it is! It's part of that miserable nonsense of hers about— But you haven't *seen* Miss Lawrence!"

FAIRFORD, in dull despair: "Yes, I've seen Miss Lawrence."

MRS. WENHAM: "And Lillian was angry with you on that account, and in her ridiculous jealousy— Well, then, I'm glad she's lost you, James."

FAIRFORD: "I'm not, Aunt Harriet. And I'm afraid it isn't just as you think it is. I must tell you something—I promised not to tell Lillian, but I may tell you—"

MRS. WENHAM: "You may tell *me anything*, James. Whom did you promise?"

FAIRFORD: "Miss Lawrence. I came at half-past four as I promised, and I found Lillian on the verandah here—"

MRS. WENHAM: "Lillian? And where was Miss Lawrence?"

FAIRFORD: "I don't know—or I didn't then; but it seems somewhere overhead;

and presently, while we were talking, she put up her window, and began calling down to Lillian, and asking her what she should wear. Lillian seemed to have forgotten about her—"

MRS. WENHAM: "Wretched child!"

FAIRFORD: "And when she remembered, she said she had promised you Miss Lawrence should see me first, and I must go away, and come back so as to give the impression that I hadn't been here."

MRS. WENHAM: "But you never consented to such an outrageous imposition?"

FAIRFORD: "I didn't like it; but I thought Lillian was right in thinking Miss Lawrence would be annoyed if she knew that I had overheard her, and I consented—in violation of every principle of my life. When I came back Miss Lawrence was here."

MRS. WENHAM: "Well?"

FAIRFORD: "It was useless. She began to let me understand at once that she knew I had been here already, and—in short, the game was up. She kept the whole thing in such form that I could neither admit it nor deny it. When Lillian returned and Miss Lawrence left us, I threatened to go away, and she begged me to

stay, and after we had some hot words, she told me to go, and—here I am. What is it all about, Aunt Harriet? Why should she promise you to let Miss Lawrence receive me, and why should Miss Lawrence wish to dress especially to please me?"

MRS. WENHAM: "I will tell you, James. But first sit down and put that bag somewhere. You're not going, and Lillian never meant you to go, any more than you meant to leave her when you threatened it. I'm glad I know just how the case stands, and I think I can make you see Lillian's behaviour in the right light, though I am thoroughly ashamed of it myself, and disgusted with her, and I've told her so. You will always have to account for something that is wholly incomprehensible in Lillian, if you expect to understand her at all."

FAIRFORD, patiently: "Yes, that is what I have always tried to do."

MRS. WENHAM: "Well, then, you can easily imagine that when she had consented to your coming here to-day, on terms that any one else would feel were the same as accepting you, she should feel the need of putting it out of her power to accept you—or rather, that she would have to be in the

greatest danger of losing you—before she was able to accept you."

FAIRFORD, making an effort: "I think I can conceive of something like that. What has it to do with Miss Lawrence's trying to please my taste in dress?"

MRS. WENHAM: "Simply this. Before she could realise your loss, Lillian had to give you to some one else."

FAIRFORD, after a moment's reflection: "If you wanted anything, would you put it out of your power, in order to realise your desire for it?"

MRS. WENHAM: "No, but Lillian would; and I should respect you a great deal more if you renounced her for ever, and took a fancy to Miss Lawrence. But I hope you won't, for I know that Lillian is devotedly fond of you."

FAIRFORD: "I'm afraid there's no danger of my renouncing her. Whom did she give me to?"

MRS. WENHAM: "Oh, you poor single-minded man! To Miss Lawrence."

FAIRFORD: "And did Miss Lawrence know it?"

MRS. WENHAM: "James, I don't wonder Lillian finds you rather trying at times. Of course she knew it! And I insisted

upon her being allowed to meet you first, and to—to—to—"

FAIRFORD: "What?"

MRS. WENHAM: "My dear, you are enough to try the patience of a saint. Such innocence as yours is *criminal*!" At this word, MRS. INGLEHART suddenly emerges from the drawing-room window upon the verandah.

IX

MRS. INGLEHART; MRS. WENHAM; AND FAIRFORD

MRS. INGLEHART: "I will not have you abusing me to James, mother."

MRS. WENHAM: "I was not speaking of you!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "You said criminal."

MRS. WENHAM: "I said James was criminal—for being so good."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh! And what have you been saying about me?"

MRS. WENHAM: "I've been explaining you."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Very well, then, I won't *be* explained—above all to Mr. Fair-

ford." She sits down and looks at her mother. "I thought he was going."

FAIRFORD, appealingly: "You know I couldn't go, Lillian—"

MRS. INGLEHART, ignoring him: "He *said* he was going; but perhaps that was a man's way of meaning that he wasn't. You never can tell what they mean from what they say. Do you know where Miss Lawrence is, mother? I wish to tell her that Mr. Fairford has changed his mind, and is going to stay after all. She may not like to come to dinner in that case; or Mr. Fairford may not like to meet her. They seem both to be victims of the same deceit, poor dears. I'm sure I don't know who has tried to deceive them, except for their own good."

FAIRFORD: "I never doubted your motive, Lillian. I know how generous you are. I only objected to the false position I was placed in with reference to Miss Lawrence."

MRS. INGLEHART, always ignoring him: "I hope you are satisfied, mother, with having insisted on my letting Miss Lawrence meet Mr. Fairford first, instead of receiving him myself as a hostess should."

MRS. WENHAM, rising in virtuous indignation: "Lillian, I will not allow you to be

so perverse! I don't care *how* old you are. You are acting like a naughty child, but I suppose it's because you are thoroughly ashamed of yourself. I've told James all about your wicked folly, and if I were he I should go away, and leave you to get out of it as you could. I wash my hands of the whole affair." MRS. WENHAM sweeps indoors and abandons the cousins to their own devices.

X

MRS. INGLEHART AND FAIRFORD

MRS. INGLEHART, after a marked silence, very mildly and meekly: "Well, Jim!"

FAIRFORD: "Well, Lil!"

MRS. INGLEHART: "What do you think of me now?"

FAIRFORD: "I haven't changed my mind: but I *think* I understand you a little better than I did."

MRS. INGLEHART: "And you still blame me? Remember I don't know what my mother's been saying about me."

FAIRFORD: "Nothing that doesn't make you dearer to me. I think she was too hard on you for a harmless joke like that."

MRS. INGLEHART: "O Jim, how sweet you are! Do you really mean it?"

FAIRFORD: "I wish you would let me prove it. I wish you could let me employ my life in proving it."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, you know I always trusted you. You 're truth itself!"

FAIRFORD: "And I always trusted you, though—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Though I'm not truth itself."

FAIRFORD: "Something like that."

MRS. INGLEHART: "How delicious! You know I always did think your candour was delicious." She puts up her hands to the back of her head, and tries to look round at the top of her chair. "I seem to be caught—"

FAIRFORD: "Can I help you?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh no." But he comes to her and frees the knot of her hair from a loose fibre of cane which has caught it. "Thank you so much, James." He does not go away, and he does not relinquish the hand she had put up to help free her hair. He sits down on the arm of her chair, and scrutinises her left-hand fingers critically.

MRS. INGLEHART: "Well?"

FAIRFORD: "I thought I couldn't be mistaken in the size. May I try it on?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Why, if you 've taken all the trouble to bring it—"

FAIRFORD: "I ventured to do it."

MRS. INGLEHART, looking fondly up into his eyes while he fits the ring on her finger: "It was no great risk."

FAIRFORD: "Does it hurt? Is it too tight?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "It is too tight, but it doesn't—hurt!" A sound of quick footfalls and rustling skirts makes itself heard within the drawing-room. MRS. INGLEHART jumps to her feet: "Oh, good gracious! There 's that detestable girl! I forgot all about her again! Run, Jim! Or no, it 's too late now. Stay!" The sound of the quick footfalls and the rustling skirts within grows vaguer. "Yes, go now. She 's executing a little manœuvre. She 's seen us, but she 's pretending she didn't, and she 's gone back to give us time before she comes out through the hall door. That 's all right. Run along now, dear, and leave me to manage with her. I don't think she 'll get anything out of *me* that I don't want her to know. Why don't you go, James? Oh! *Goose!*" She puts her

arms round his neck, as he bends over her, and kisses him, and then pushes him decisively away. As he disappears round the corner of the verandah, she calls: "Miss Lawrence! Roberta! Is that you?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "I am looking for a handkerchief I left— Oh, here it is!" She appears at the door, and looks out. "I thought Mr. Fairford—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "He was here a moment ago, but he 's gone to his room—I suppose to his room. I've been so much interested in your psychical experience, Roberta."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Then he 's told! I might have expected it."

MRS. INGLEHART: "You 'd have been disappointed if you had. Men needn't tell things. They 've merely to say they won't, and then women are inspired with the facts. I guessed what had happened as soon as I saw the kind of trouble he was in, and I envied you the opportunity you had of— rattling him. Do tell me just how you did it."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Do you think that will be necessary?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "No, I don't know that I do. And I admire you for your

reticence. I supposed frankness was your strong point."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Isn't that always a forlorn hope with us? The pose of utter despair? The last resort?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Perhaps it is. I was just going to try it with you. There seems nothing else for it."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Ah, you pique my curiosity. What is it you *could* be frank about? I mean—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I see what you mean. But you remember that a little while ago, here, I gave you James Fairford?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes; and 'the gods themselves cannot resume their gifts.'"

MRS. INGLEHART: "I don't know about the gods, but I'm sure the goddesses could. My dear Roberta, I want him back. I must have him. Come, now, be very, very nice, and let me have him again! Won't you? I know that legally, and everything else, he belongs to you, and I suppose that in a court of justice I shouldn't have the slightest chance. But I throw myself on your mercy. See!" She comes over to where the girl has seated herself, and drops on her knees before her. "Let me have him, dear! I'd no idea I cared anything

about him till I'd parted with him. Come! Say the word!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "And I, what am I to do with the wealth of affection that I had prepared to lavish upon him?"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, give it to somebody else! Jim won't mind."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Ah, that's just what I'm not so sure about! I've an idea that he is madly devoted to me. In fact, I can't give him up till I know from his own lips that he wishes to be given up. Yes, he must renounce me—"

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, but I assure you he doesn't care anything about you—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "That I must know from himself. I insist upon his choosing between us!"

MRS. INGLEHART, rising: "Do you really mean it?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes; I think it would be fun."

MRS. INGLEHART, with genuine feeling: "I can't say it's my idea of a joke. Well, then, it may be very inhospitable, and all that, and I wish it could have come about a little more gracefully, but I have to tell you— Oh, have you hurt yourself?" She takes note of the handkerchief which MISS

LAWRENCE has wrapped around her left hand; the girl puts the hand behind her. "Can't I give you something? Arnica? Pond's Extract? How did you do it? *Putting up the window?*"

MISS LAWRENCE, in embarrassment: "No, no—"

MRS. INGLEHART, dryly: "I'm very sorry. Those window-catches are awkward things. I've caught my fingers when I've been thinking of something else."

MISS LAWRENCE: "It wasn't the window-catch, I assure you, Mrs. Inglehart, and I don't know how to tell you what it is, exactly. I thought it would be so simple; but— I ought never to have let you give me Mr. Fairford."

MRS. INGLEHART: "Oh, don't mind that. I've taken him back again."

MISS LAWRENCE: "Oh, that doesn't make it right on my part. I meant to have told you before; but I couldn't get the chance; and then it seemed to get more and more complicated, and—"

MRS. INGLEHART, impatiently: "Well?"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Well!" She puts out her left hand to MRS. INGLEHART, and covers her eyes with the handkerchief she has caught from it.

MRS. INGLEHART, clutching it wildly: "An engagement ring!"

MISS LAWRENCE: "Yes, we were engaged last week, and when you began to speak to me, and I didn't know quite how—I hadn't the courage—"

MRS. INGLEHART, flinging MISS LAWRENCE'S hand from her: "Then it was all a trick from the beginning! And you let me make a fool of myself in that way, and all the time you were engaged! And you said you never met him before—"

MISS LAWRENCE, in amaze: "How could I say such a thing? We've known each other for years."

MRS. INGLEHART: "So it appears. And I don't know how you could say you'd never seen him, but I know you did say it. Perhaps you'd like *two* engagement rings. You may have mine—" She tries to get it off.

MISS LAWRENCE: "What *do* you mean? What are you doing? Whom are you talking about?"

MRS. INGLEHART, still struggling violently with the ring: "James Fairford. You may have both his rings—"

MISS LAWRENCE: "James Fairford! I don't want his rings—either of them. I'm

engaged to Arthur Wayland! Do you think there's only one man in the world?"

MRS. INGLEHART, after a moment's daze: "Then you—you—I see—yes! Oh, you dear! Oh, I'm so happy for you!" She falls upon MISS LAWRENCE'S neck and clasps her to her heart. "Arthur Wayland? He's charming, and he's a very lucky fellow, but he deserves you if any one does. Ah, ha, ha! Oh, hu, hu, hu!" MRS. WENHAM appears at one corner of the verandah, and FAIRFORD at the other, from different sides of the house.

XI

MRS. WENHAM; FAIRFORD; MISS LAWRENCE; MRS. INGLEHART

MRS. WENHAM, sternly: "What is the matter, Lillian?"

MRS. INGLEHART, between tears and laughter: "Nothing, nothing! Roberta is engaged, and I'm merely congratulating her."

THE SMOKING-CAR

SCENE: In the smoking-car of a suburban train on the Boston and Albany Railroad, in the Albany Depôt at Boston. MR. EDWARD ROBERTS is seated, deeply absorbed in a book which he is reading. He has a pile of newspapers and magazines beside him, and he rests an absent hand on them. The seat in front is opened toward him, and he keeps a foot against its edge with the effect of laying claim to it, while a YOUNG MOTHER, with a child in her arms, enters hastily and looks distractedly about. There is no one else in the car, and after walking its length she returns and addresses herself anxiously to MR. ROBERTS.

I

ROBERTS AND THE YOUNG MOTHER

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Is this the car for Newton Centre?"

ROBERTS, starting wildly from his book: "Newton Centre? Why, I don't know; I presume so; yes. Yes, I think so. I'm going to Newton Centre myself. It *is* the car for Newton Centre, isn't it?"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "The brakeman said it was."

ROBERTS: "Oh, well, then, it must be. Why—"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Because my husband 's coming to go with me and I didn't want to get into the wrong car. He had to run back to the store for some things." She approaches ROBERTS, and looks down at the seats before and beside him. "But if you 're going there, it must be all right. Is this seat occupied?"

ROBERTS: "Well, not at present. I'm expecting some friends, but—"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Oh, well, all right, then. Should you mind if I put my baby down by you here a minute?"

ROBERTS, reluctantly, but more absently than reluctantly: "Why, no; I suppose not."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, with an air of explanation: "You see, I've got to go and get my bag. I had it sent over from the boat—we just got in this morning, off the

boat, you know—the Bangor boat; and it's so heavy—I'll have to hunt it up at the express office, anyway—that it don't seem as if I could manage both at the same time; and I don't know but what I'll telegraph to my husband's folks that we've got here, too. I wouldn't ask to leave her with you, but there doesn't seem to be anybody else I *can* ask, and I don't believe she'll make you any *great* trouble. May I?"

ROBERTS: "Why, yes; of course—that is, certainly, if—"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Oh, I don't believe she'll cry, and I shan't be gone but a minute, anyway." ROBERTS does not offer to remove the papers at his side, and THE YOUNG MOTHER, after smoothing the baby's dress carefully under her, puts her down on the top of them. "Now, baby, don't you cry. Mamma will be back in a minute. Good-bye! Good-bye!" She retreats a few steps, and flutters her hand at the baby. "Goo, goo! Smile a little! Smile for the gentleman! There! She'll be all right, and I'll be right back. Do you know where the baggage-express office is?"

ROBERTS, in a daze: "It's in the station, I think."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Right close to the place where the New York train stops?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, yes—I think so, I believe so—yes, it is."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "That's what the black man that calls the trains said; but I thought I'd better make sure, because there ain't much time to lose. Don't you topple over, baby!" She runs forward and saves the baby from falling against the side of the seat from the top of the magazines. "There! Mamma just caught you, didn't she?" To ROBERTS: "If you don't mind, I'll just throw these things on to the seat in front of you, and then she'll sit steadier." She lifts the baby, and flings ROBERTS'S papers upon the other seat, and then replaces the baby at his side. "Now she'll do nicely. I'm so glad I happened to think of it before I went, for she might have fallen forward just as well as sideways; and it—*would* you mind putting your hand round her a *little* mite so as to keep her up? She *is* so wiggly!" ROBERTS glares stupidly up through his glasses and she takes hold of his arm and passes it round the baby. "If you'll excuse me! There! Now she *will* do." She moves backward to the door of the car again, waving her hand at the baby.

"By-by, precious! Don't you be afraid! Mamma 'll be back as soon as she 's got her bag. Goo, goo! Goo, goo!" She disappears through the door, but instantly reappears. "Do you know how soon it starts?"

ROBERTS, stupidly: "What starts?"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Why, the car?"

ROBERTS: "Oh! Oh yes! The train! I don't know."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Does it start at half-past nine, exactly?"

ROBERTS: "I 'm sure I don't know. Yes, yes! I believe it does. Yes, my friends were to take the 9.30."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, laughing: "You seem to be pretty easy for a person that was to meet friends. I sh 'd been in a perfect fidge to know whether I 'd got the right train." ROBERTS makes no response to her remark, and a doubt rushes visibly into THE YOUNG MOTHER'S face. "You 're sure it *is* the car for Newton Centre?"

ROBERTS, with some spirit: "I think I said that I was going to Newton Centre myself."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Yes, that 's what you *said*. But you might have got the wrong car. I *guess* it 's all right, though.

And you think this is the one that goes at half-past nine?"

ROBERTS, looking mechanically at his watch: "Yes, yes! Half-past nine!"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Good gracious! Is it half-past nine already? Then there won't be time to—"

ROBERTS: "No, no! It isn't half-past nine; it's only ten minutes past."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Well, that's nice. And this is the half-past nine *train*?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, that's what I meant."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, returning a few steps within: "I questioned the black man that calls out the trains in the waiting-room pretty close up about it, and he said it *was*. But he might have made a mistake, because he has to keep so many on his mind. I asked him if he didn't, oftentimes; but he says that's just the reason he never does. I told *him* that I should go perfectly distracted; and I cautioned him about my husband coming to meet me on the 9.30 train, and he said there couldn't be any mistake about it. Do you suppose there could?"

ROBERTS: "About what?"

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "About the train."

ROBERTS: "Oh, none whatever; not the least in the world. It's the train for Newton Centre, I'm quite certain."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "The 9.30?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, the 9.30."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "And what time did you say it was now?"

ROBERTS: "I'm sure I don't know."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Why, you just looked at your watch!"

ROBERTS: "Did I? I thought you wanted to know what train it was."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, after a moment's doubt, in a burst of kindly perception and confidence: "Well, I guess your friends *better* come! But it's like John, half the time, and I guess most men are just so, if the truth was known. It's a comfort to feel that you can be trusted in spite of yourselves. Won't you see what time it is again, please?"

ROBERTS, looking at his watch again: "Ten minutes after nine."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, easily: "Oh, well, then!" She returns and pulls the baby's clothing straight over the toes of her small shoes, kisses her, hugs her, and kisses her again. "There! Now, I *will* go! And if my husband *should* happen to come in while

I'm gone, will you tell him I'm just out hunting for my bag?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, yes. I shan't forget."

THE YOUNG MOTHER, in a burst of good feeling: "I *guess* I can trust you. I should like to tell your wife about your looking at your watch for the day of the week, if it's her that's coming to meet you, and have a real good laugh with her." She beams kindly though somewhat patronisingly upon ROBERTS, as she retreats once more toward the door. "By-by, baby! I'll be right back. I don't know but I'd better tell *her* to look after *you*." She laughs towards ROBERTS, as if this were a joke he must enjoy with her, and vanishes through the door of the car just as MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL enters by the door at the other end. He walks down the car towards ROBERTS, approaching him from behind.

II

CAMPBELL AND ROBERTS

CAMPBELL: "Hello, Roberts! What are you doing in the smoker?" He leans over ROBERTS to put various parcels into the rack,

without observing the baby. "You 'll be taking to drink next."

ROBERTS, vaguely: "Is this the smoker?"

CAMPBELL: "It 's going to be, as soon as I can light a cigar. But I don't know what you 'll say to Agnes when she finds you here, wreathed in a cloud of tobacco. She 's coming with Amy, isn't she?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, I think she said so."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I 'll tell you what, Roberts: you think too much; you ought to *know* something. Now, even *I* know that those two women are coming down here to join us, and they 'll go flying about like a couple of distracted hens when they don't find you. They 'll never think of looking for you here, and they don't want me, and they 'll be in an awful flutter."

ROBERTS, anxiously: "Perhaps I 'd better go into another car."

CAMPBELL: "No; this would be a good place to have it out with them. There won't be anybody else here, probably, and it will be quite like your own fireside. One of the few advantages of going home with you and Agnes, when you 've been in over night with us, is that you can have the smoker all to yourself in the morning. The commuters don't begin going out till after-

noon, and probably there won't be a soul at this hour to interrupt a family row. Still, I don't know but it would be safest to divide up, and you go into another car, as you don't smoke." He continues to fit parcels into the racks as he talks.

ROBERTS: "Yes, I really think it would, but I don't know what to do with this—" He glances down at the baby.

CAMPBELL, heaving a final parcel into the rack: "There! *That's* done for." He turns about and follows ROBERTS's glance. "Hello! What 's that? Why, I was just going to sit on it! Did you find it here?"

ROBERTS: "No, no; it was left here—it was put in my charge—that is—"

CAMPBELL: "Who left it?"

ROBERTS, with spirit: "Who left it? Why, its mother, of course!"

CAMPBELL: "Its mother? Where is she?"

ROBERTS: "I 'm sure I don't know. She went out to get her bag at the express office, and she 'll be back directly."

CAMPBELL, sitting down in the seat before ROBERTS and the baby, and confronting ROBERTS and the baby with a hard, judicial aspect: "How long has she been gone?"

ROBERTS: "She went out just as you came in. She hasn't been gone a moment."

CAMPBELL: "And she asked if she might leave the baby here with you while she was gone?"

ROBERTS: "Yes."

CAMPBELL: "And you said she might?"

ROBERTS: "I couldn't very well refuse. I let her leave it, of course."

CAMPBELL: "Of course." He relents so far as to make a silent inventory of the baby's features and draperies. "It's rather a nice little thing."

ROBERTS, with relief: "Yes, and it's been very good."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, it hasn't had time to be bad yet, if its mother's just gone out." After a moment: "Besides, it's probably drugged."

ROBERTS, in alarm: "Drugged?"

CAMPBELL: "They usually drug them when they leave them that way."

ROBERTS: "What do you mean by 'leave them that way?'"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, nothing. Hello! it's going off!"

ROBERTS, grappling with the child: "Going off! Good heavens! She was *afraid* I should let it fall."

CAMPBELL: "I don't mean that. It 's going to sleep; don't you see? It *is* drugged! No wonder it 's so good. Well, I congratulate you, Roberts."

ROBERTS, angrily: "Congratulate me? What do you mean, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "I don't know what Agnes will say to your taking such a responsibility without consulting her, but if you would *do* it, why I don't believe you could have adopted a prettier child."

ROBERTS: "Adopted!"

CAMPBELL: "Do you mean to say you didn't know what you were about? In this paragraphic age, when every other day you might read of young mothers getting unwary strangers to hold their babies a moment, and then walking off and never coming back, do you mean to tell me you didn't know what game that woman was playing? Well, *you* ought to be left with somebody, and I've half a mind to adopt you myself. That 's all." He falls back against the seat, opens a newspaper, and makes a show of reading it. ROBERTS leans forward and desperately rends it from him.

ROBERTS: "Willis, do you suppose—do you think—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I let *you* do the thinking. I simply *know*. I don't go beyond that. I leave thinking to men of intellect. I'm nothing but a business man."

ROBERTS: "And what do you know?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, nothing. Merely that you're in for it!"

ROBERTS, sternly: "Do you mean that—that—poor creature has abandoned her child, and isn't coming back any more?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, not if you ask it in that threatening way, my dear fellow. I didn't put her up to it."

ROBERTS: "Well, it's preposterous! She could hardly tear herself from it. She came back again and again, to kiss it, and—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I dare say! The natural feeling would assert itself at the last moment. I suppose I should do just so myself if I were a mother and meant to abandon my child. You couldn't expect less of her."

ROBERTS: "But what possible motive could she have for abandoning her child? Why should she do such a monstrous—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, well, there are various reasons. Perhaps her husband had abandoned *her*; or she may have been a young widow with no means of supporting it.

There are always good grounds for a mother's deserting her infant when she does it. What sort of a looking person was she?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know. Very good-looking, I believe."

CAMPBELL: "Oh!"

ROBERTS: "And young — and nicely dressed — very respectable in appearance—"

CAMPBELL: "Ah!"

ROBERTS: "And smiling, and—"

CAMPBELL: "Of course; she had to put that on, poor thing! It wouldn't have done to let you see how heart-broken she really was. That would have roused even *your* misgivings. Was she what you would have called a lady?"

ROBERTS, thoughtfully: "Not — not exactly: not in the society sense, that is. I should say she was a nice village person— the wife of a prosperous mechanic. She spoke of her husband's 'folks.'"

CAMPBELL: "Precisely. Well, all you 've got to do now is to reconcile Agnes to the inevitable. She 'll come round in time, but of course—"

ROBERTS, with an effort for lightness: "Oh, come now, Willis; there 's enough

of this. I don't mind a joke, but there's such a thing as carrying it too far."

CAMPBELL: "Ah, that's what you ought to have said to the unnatural mother." He leans forward and looks closely at the infant. "Do you suppose there's any mark on its clothing, or any little note tucked in anywhere that would form a clue."

ROBERTS, faltering: "I don't know. I never thought—"

CAMPBELL: "Then, for once, you ought to have thought. Better look—"

ROBERTS: "But I can't. I am afraid that if I disturb her she may—"

CAMPBELL: "Cry? Very likely. But you must do something, you know. Couldn't you pass your hand—I don't believe you'll wake her—softly over her, and if anything crackles like paper—" ROBERTS acts upon this suggestion, so far as may be without risk to the child's tranquillity. "No! All is silent. Well, then, the only thing is, should you know the mother again if you saw her?"

ROBERTS: "I don't believe I should. Would you—would you go out and look for her?"

CAMPBELL: "But if you wouldn't know her when you saw her?"

ROBERTS: "That 's true! But something must be done! What would *you* do?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, if you don't really want to keep the poor little thing, or if you don't suppose Agnes—"

ROBERTS: "No, no; impossible! It isn't to be thought of!" He has got to his feet, and is standing over CAMPBELL in great excitement, while CAMPBELL remains calm.

CAMPBELL: "Then, I 'll tell you what you can do, and it 's the only thing you can do. You 'd better take the baby, and run through the crowd; and perhaps if the mother sees you,—she 'll be hanging about remorsefully,—she may relent and want it back."

ROBERTS, catching up the child from the seat: "Would you—would you—try leaving it with the brakeman, first? He might have noticed what sort of looking person she was, and—"

CAMPBELL, tolerantly: "Yes, you might try that." ROBERTS rushes from the car with the little one, while CAMPBELL fastens his face to the car window, and expresses in vivid pantomime his pleasure in some spectacle without. He turns as ROBERTS re-enters the car, with the child in his arms. "Well?"

ROBERTS, breathlessly: "He won't do it. He says it isn't his business to look out for passengers' children, and I 'd better find its mother, if I can!"

CAMPBELL: "The heartless ruffian! But you see, now, don't you?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, yes! I see! You 're probably right. But what would you do now?"

CAMPBELL: "I don't see what 's left, except to do what the brakeman and I have advised."

ROBERTS: "And if I can't find her?"

CAMPBELL: "Then you 'll have to bring the baby back, and throw yourself on Agnes's mercy. Or, hold on! Yes, I think you might try that; you might try leaving it at the package window. Very likely they 'd take charge of it there, if you checked it, and keep it till the mother called for it. But most probably you 'll find her, and when she sees that you are determined not to be put upon, perhaps—"

ROBERTS: "And—and—you don't think it would be better for me to leave the baby here with you, and run out and look for its mother myself?"

CAMPBELL: "I *know* it wouldn't. The whole moral effect upon her would be lost

without the baby. Besides, how would you know her? You must take the baby for the moral effect upon her."

ROBERTS, with despairing conviction: "That is true!" He rushes out again, and again CAMPBELL attaches himself to the window, while from the other end of the car MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. CAMPBELL advance falteringly and doubtfully towards him, with many diffident looks to the right and left. They seem to decide simultaneously that the figure at the window is CAMPBELL, for they start vividly forward.

III

MRS. ROBERTS; MRS. CAMPBELL; AND CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Where is Edward? We 've been all through the train and—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "We can't find him anywhere. We knew we should find *you* in the smoking-car, and so I brought Agnes right in. Haven't you seen him?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, certainly. Haven't you?" He turns and faces them hardily.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course we haven't. Do you think we'd ask if we had?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "What do you mean, Willis? Has he been here?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I thought you must have met him. He hasn't been gone a moment. He's just gone out with the baby."

MRS. ROBERTS: "The baby? What baby?"

CAMPBELL: "That's just what Roberts is going to find out if he can. He's looking for the mother."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Willis, dear, don't tease! What do you mean by the mother?"

CAMPBELL: "What does anybody mean by the mother? The mother of the baby. Roberts is out looking for the mother who left the baby. Isn't that plain enough?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, pouncingly: "No, Willis, that is *not* enough! And I want you to stop your teasing, and tell us what you mean by a mother leaving her baby. Where did she leave it?"

CAMPBELL: "Here."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "When?"

CAMPBELL: "About ten minutes ago."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What for?"

CAMPBELL: "Ah, there you have me."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis, if you don't answer me, I shall make a scene and disgrace you before the whole car. I am not going to be trifled with any longer."

CAMPBELL: "I don't blame you, Amy. I shouldn't like it myself. As long as there 's nobody but Agnes in the car I shan't mind your making a scene, and as we 're likely to have the smoker to ourselves on a 9.30 train, why not sit down and wait here till Roberts gets back?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, firmly: "No, we shall not sit down, or anything, till you explain yourself. Now, don't go on with that nonsense about the mother and the baby, because we won't *stand* it."

CAMPBELL: "Then what *shall* I go on with?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, go on with *anything*, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "Very well, then, all that I can say is that I found Roberts here, five minutes ago, in charge of a baby—or child of a year—which he said had been left with him by its mother, while she went out to look for her baggage at the express office."

BOTH LADIES: "Well?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, after a few moments'

conversation with me he took the child and went out to look up the mother."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But why did he do that?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why didn't he simply wait till she came back?"

CAMPBELL: "Perhaps he thought she wasn't coming back?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, nonsense, Willis!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, visibly shaken: "They really do it sometimes, Agnes. I've read about it myself. But—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, they never do it in the world. It doesn't stand to reason, Amy. If Willis were a mother himself he wouldn't even suggest such a thing!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with conviction: "Of course he wouldn't. And if this is one of his miserable jokes—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't pretend to be a mother, but I hope I understand the feelings of a man, and I assure you that I wouldn't joke on such a subject."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Then what *are* you joking about?"

CAMPBELL: "I am not joking at all."

MRS. ROBERTS, visibly daunted: "I can't believe the wretched creature would really

do it. Why didn't you ask the brakeman if he had noticed where she went?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, that's what Roberts did, and he wanted to leave the baby with him, but the brakeman said he had better find the mother himself—if he could. Roberts came back to report, and then he went out again. I suppose if he *can't* find her, you'll have to keep it, Agnes; it's a pretty little creature, and it seemed good. Hello! Here it comes, bringing Roberts with it!" ROBERTS enters the car flustered and dazed, with the signs of anxiety and disappointment filling his face, and drops of perspiration starting from his brow. "Well, where *was* she?"

IV

ROBERTS AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Did you find her? What did she say?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why didn't you leave the baby with her?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why didn't she come back with you?"

ROBERTS, frantically: "Because I didn't

find her. I've been to the express office and everywhere."

CAMPBELL, to MRS. ROBERTS: "You see!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "But you *must* find her, Edward!"

CAMPBELL: "Did you try leaving it at the package window?"

ROBERTS: "No; I couldn't quite bring myself to that."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Of course you couldn't! And nobody but Willis could have the heart to suggest such an inhuman thing. The package window!" She drops on one knee before ROBERTS, who sits supporting the baby in his lap, and begins to study it. "Poor little creature! How good it is; and it's perfectly lovely, with those big blue eyes; and it's as clean as a pin. Why, it's charming, and it isn't the least afraid. Just see it, Agnes!"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, Roberts said its mother had beautiful eyes and an attractive smile, and was nicely dressed. He seemed to have noticed everything about her."

MRS. CAMPBELL, still considering the baby: "You can see what a good mother she is. Of course she isn't rich, but it's all the better cared for on that account.

She hasn't left it to any horrid shirk of a nurse. It 's as sweet as a little pink, isn't it, Agnes ?"

MRS. ROBERTS, leaning forward in some distraction: "Oh yes; it shows the mother's touch. Was she young, Edward?"

ROBERTS: "I don't know—I think so—I didn't notice—quite girlish, I should say. She kept coming back to take leave of it."

CAMPBELL: "I tell him that was the remorse working in her."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Nonsense! She never meant to leave it in the world."

CAMPBELL: "Then why doesn't she come back? It 's twenty minutes past nine now."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Very well, then; something has happened to her!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, something *must* have happened to her. Why doesn't some one go out and look for her? It seems so terrible for us to be keeping her baby here and not knowing what has happened to her."

CAMPBELL: "But if nothing has happened—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't *hint* such a thing. You *know* there has. You ought to go out and see!"

CAMPBELL: "I? Roberts ought to go and see. I shouldn't know her if I found her."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, do go, Willis! Poor Edward is all worn out. Look at him!" ROBERTS has fallen back in extreme dejection and exhaustion, and he supports the baby on his knee with so lax a hand that it topples forward. The ladies scream, and CAMPBELL catches it from him.

CAMPBELL: "Look what you're about, Roberts! You're not fit to have an abandoned child left with you. Bless my soul, it's off again!"

THE LADIES: "Off?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, it's going to sleep."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "So it is, poor little forsaken soul! Let me take it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "The little darling!" As MRS. CAMPBELL possesses herself of the baby: "Be careful, Amy!"

CAMPBELL: "It was asleep when Roberts went out with it. Roberts thinks it's drugged."

ROBERTS: "No, no, Willis; you suggested that. Though it is strange it sleeps so much. She said they were right off the boat, and perhaps they didn't sleep well during the night."

MRS. CAMPBELL, pressing her face into the baby's: "To be sure they didn't, poor things!"

CAMPBELL: "And the mother may have fallen asleep in the express office with her bag in her arms. That would account for her not coming back."

MRS. CAMPBELL, not minding him: "If she doesn't come back I shall keep it myself."

CAMPBELL: "Not if I know it, Mrs. Campbell. That baby is *my* property."

MRS. ROBERTS: "But if her mother left her with Edward—"

CAMPBELL: "It was because I hadn't come in yet. She'd never have left her with Roberts if she had seen *me*. What shall we call her, Amy?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, no! We mustn't think of it till we've left no stone unturned. You must go out and look for her, Willis, and if you don't find her—"

CAMPBELL: "But haven't I told you that I shouldn't know her if I saw her?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "It doesn't matter about your not knowing her. She'll know you if you have the baby with you."

CAMPBELL: "Have the baby with me? Ha, ha, ha! I think I see myself running

about with a baby in my arms asking people for its mother!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "You made Edward do it."

CAMPBELL: "That was another thing. She left it with him."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But you said she would have left it with you if she had seen you first, and now you must take it." She tries to push it into his arms.

CAMPBELL: "Oh, come, now! You don't want to make me ridiculous, Amy!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You wouldn't really be ridiculous. I'm sure that any one who saw you, and knew what you were doing to save a poor woman from despair, would praise you up to the skies for it."

ROBERTS: "I really think you could manage it better than I, Willis; you are so ready, and you know how to take people so cleverly. Nobody would think of making a joke of you."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, *wouldn't* they!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And if they did, it oughtn't to make the least difference to you. You ought to be glad of it. And, at any rate, you've got to go." She makes him take the child from her.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, Willis, you *must*! Poor Edward is perfectly gone."

CAMPBELL: "Well, so am I." He suddenly drops the baby into ROBERTS'S lap, and makes a start towards the door. The two ladies fling themselves in his way with one cry of protest and despair.

MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You won't refuse such a *little* thing, Willis!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "If he does, I will never speak to him again!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well, then, if it comes to that! Here, give her to me." He seizes the baby from ROBERTS and dashes from the car laughing.

V

MRS. CAMPBELL; MRS. ROBERTS; ROBERTS

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, I knew he would, if we could only appeal to his better nature."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I *hope* it 's his better nature. But I didn't like his laughing."

ROBERTS: "That may have been merely nervous; it made *me* nervous. But Willis

manages these things so well ; he 's so full of resource. I feel quite sure he 'll find her."

MRS. ROBERTS, pressing to the window, and looking out: "He 's disappeared already ! I shouldn't like to look for any one in that crowded station. He *is* energetic."

MRS. CAMPBELL, joining her : "He knew that I was in earnest. But I don't want to make him feel ridiculous. If I'd thought he really cared— But something had to be done, and done instantly. Did they laugh at *you*, Mr. Roberts ?"

ROBERTS : "Well, I can't say laugh, exactly. No, I don't think I could say they laughed outright. But when I ran about, and asked if they had seen anybody—any lady—who had left her baby with a gentleman in the smoking-car, while she went out to look up her bag at the express office, they smiled."

MRS. CAMPBELL : "I suppose it did amuse them ; men are so peculiar. I hope I wasn't too precipitate with poor Willis. But I knew that he could do something if he was forced to it."

ROBERTS : "Yes, he 'll come out of it all right, with his tact and invention. He 'll find her, easily enough."

MRS. ROBERTS, in a transport of triumph: "He *has* found her! There he is, coming back, without the baby!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Where? Oh yes; I see him! I do believe he *has* found her; and now I owe him any reparation that he chooses to ask. I'll confess that I was wrong to send him. He *is* good, isn't he, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "He's beautiful! And you're just the wife for him, Amy. You do appreciate him."

ROBERTS: "Willis is magnificent. I envy him his executive ability."

ALL THREE, as CAMPBELL enters the car, turning from the window: "Well?"

VI

CAMPBELL AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Where did you find her?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "What did she say?"

ROBERTS: "How did you know her?"

CAMPBELL: "Nowhere; and nothing; and I didn't."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Then what did you do?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Where is the baby?"

ROBERTS: "How did you get rid of it?"

CAMPBELL: "The way you ought to have done, my dear fellow. I left it with the matron—or whatever she is—of the ladies' waiting-room."

MRS. ROBERTS: "O Willis!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And here we had been praising you so, and I was sorry that I had made you go! Well, that is what I get for ever regretting that I treated you badly."

ROBERTS: "You think it will occur to the mother to inquire of the matron—"

CAMPBELL: "She won't make any inquiries! Or if, by one chance in a thousand, she wants her baby again, and makes a row for it after our train's gone, the matron is the very first person she'll be sent to. I thought it all out. In the other event, it will be handed over to the proper authorities and sent to the Derelict Infants' Home—or something. At any rate, it's off *our* hands."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Indeed it isn't. If she doesn't come for her baby, I'm going to keep it myself."

CAMPBELL: "You? Why you're worse than Roberts."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I don't care who I'm

worse than. Agnes doesn't want it, for she 's got children of her own, and so you may go straight and bring it back here. Do, Willis ! I 'm truly in earnest. If that poor thing should come here for her baby before you brought it back, I don't know what I should say to excuse you."

CAMPBELL : "Oh, I could trust you to think of something."

MRS. CAMPBELL : " Don't tease, dearest, and *do* run !"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Yes, Willis, you must. It would be shocking to have her come for it, and we have to make some sort of lame explanation. Hurry as fast as you can. It must be nearly train time."

ROBERTS, looking at his watch : " Yes, it 's five minutes of it. But that 's plenty of time for Willis—if he doesn't delay."

CAMPBELL : " Oh, hello ? Don't *you* join in, Roberts. It was you who got us all into this trouble, and now I 'm going to let you go and get the baby from the matron yourself. There 's plenty of time for you, if you don't stand here dilly-dallying."

ROBERTS : "But the matron wouldn't know me, and she wouldn't give it to me."

CAMPBELL : " I guess she 'll give it to anybody that asks for it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Very well, then, I 'll go for it myself. After this, don't pretend that you have the least regard for me. Don't try to stop me!"

CAMPBELL, interposing himself between his wife and the door: "Only over my prostrate form, Amy. I 'm going. Your reasoning has convinced me; but you know that if you adopt this child I am not going to take care of it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No, no, Willis. I shall never ask you. I assume the whole responsibility. Oh, how sweet you are! You always come round in the end."

CAMPBELL: "I always listen to reason, even when I 'm going to make a fool of myself. But suppose somebody 's got it away from the matron on false pretences, and I can't bring it?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't come back without it!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well." He rushes out.

VII

MRS. CAMPBELL; MRS. ROBERTS; ROBERTS

MRS. CAMPBELL, watching him through the window: "He did hate to go!" Turn-

ing to MRS. ROBERTS: "Perhaps I've been rash, Agnes."

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, not in the least, Amy. I should have been just so with Edward, and he would have hated it quite as much as Willis; wouldn't you, Edward?"

ROBERTS: "Oh, quite. It would have been extremely disagreeable."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Then I wish you had spoken before, Mr. Roberts. I didn't want to treat Willis worse than Agnes would have treated you. I am sure we have both, Willis and I, tried to consider you in the matter."

ROBERTS: "Of course. You certainly have, and I am very grateful for your kindness. But you know I didn't like to interfere, exactly."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward is always very careful in such matters."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, I am sure he meant well. But if Willis had been in his place and you in mine, I think Willis would have said something to stop me—or you, I mean."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I hope you don't blame poor Edward, Amy, if you have been a little harsh with Willis."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Then you think I

have been harsh! Well, I must say I didn't expect this of you, Agnes, when I was doing it all to relieve Edward of a difficulty."

MRS. ROBERTS: "You know I didn't mean to reproach you, Amy."

ROBERTS: "And we both thoroughly appreciate what you and Willis have done. I'm sure I don't know what would have become of *me* without your help—or his."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, I assume nothing for myself." She takes out her handkerchief and wipes her eyes with a swift dash, and then runs it back into her pocket. "Don't regard *me*, please! But I wish the next time you think I am making Willis make a fool of himself, you wouldn't hesitate to say so."

MRS. ROBERTS, glancing out of the window: "There! There he is coming back."

MRS. CAMPBELL, springing to the window beside her: "Don't tell me he isn't bringing the baby! Yes, yes! He's got it. And now I forgive him everything. I'm sure I don't know what we shall do with it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, I thought you wanted to adopt it, Amy."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Not if it's been the

cause of my making Willis make a fool of himself. I should always detest the sight of it." She turns to encounter her husband, as he enters the car, red and perspiring, with the child in his arms. "Had she come for it? Did the matron give it up willingly? Were you very ridiculous, Willis? Did she laugh at you? What did you say to her?"

VIII

CAMPBELL AND THE OTHERS

CAMPBELL, sinking breathless into the seat beside her: "One thing at a time, my dear, and nothing till I 've got my wind." He pursues, panting: "There hadn't been any rush for her, not even on the part of the unnatural mother, and I dare say I was more a fool than I looked."

MRS. ROBERTS, fondly and proudly: "Oh, you *couldn't* be, Willis, dear!"

CAMPBELL: "Thank you, Agnes, you are always so flattering. But the main point is that I got the baby back for you, and here it is, Amy, and the sooner you take it— Hello!" They all start into listening postures, while an excited and anxious woman's voice makes itself heard from without in

apparent parley with the brakeman on the platform:—

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "Is this the half-past nine o'clock train for Newton Centre!"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE: "Well, for that and about twenty other places."

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "The half-past nine?"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE: "Yes, ma'am."

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "You're sure it hasn't gone?"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE: "Well, I won't be, in about two minutes."

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "Oh, my gracious! Which is the smoking-car?"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE: "This is."

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "And was there a lady, here, about half an hour ago, that came out and told you she had left her baby in the car with a strange gentleman, and asked you whether you thought it would be safe, and said she would be back in about a minute, and asked you to tell her just how soon the train started, and said she was going to get her bag at the express office, and asked you if you would look in now and then and see how the baby was getting along, and asked how she should know the car again, and you said it was the smoking-

car, and she would know it by that, and—"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE: "Yes, ma'am."

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: "Goodness! Then there ain't a minute to lose!"

CAMPBELL: "The unnatural mother! What are you going to say to her when she comes in to rob you of your adoptive child?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I shall know what to say. I hope *you* will."

CAMPBELL: "I hope Roberts will."

IX

THE YOUNG MOTHER AND THE OTHERS

THE YOUNG MOTHER, at the door, peering down the aisle till she catches sight of the baby, which CAMPBELL has expeditiously transferred to ROBERTS'S knee, and then running towards the group: "Oh, there were so many, was afraid I never should get to the right one. But it *is* the car, and there you are, baby, as bright as a biscuit! Did you think mamma had forgotten her precious? O you darling!" She catches the baby from CAMPBELL, and crushes it to

her breast and face; and then turns to ROBERTS: "I don't know what you 'll think of my being gone so long, but I have had such a time! First off, I thought I 'd telegraph to his folks that we 'd got here safe, but I couldn't seem to find the right place to send the despatch to very easy—they live back in the country, a little ways—and then after I got it off, I went to the express office for my bag, and lo! and behold it wasn't there, and they said the baggage from the Bangor boat wasn't in yet, and I thought I *should* go through the floor; and who should I see but John himself, just about as wild as I was, looking for me and baby; and he 's gone back to look after my bag on the boat, and we 've concluded to stay till he gets it. He said he 'd been all through the cars looking for baby and me, and he couldn't find us."

CAMPBELL: "He probably didn't look into the smoking-car."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Well, there, I guess you 're right; and I don't know as I blame him any, for I didn't intend to get into it myself, and the gentleman here—" she nods down at ROBERTS—"didn't tell me it was a smoking-car when I left baby with him, and—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, that's just his way. He didn't know it himself."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Well, he did seem pretty absent-minded, so I didn't feel exactly right about leaving baby with him, but I had to leave her with somebody, and—"

CAMPBELL: "You couldn't have chosen better."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "I'm sure I'm ever so much obliged—"

CAMPBELL: "Don't mention it; we've all helped—my wife here, and my sister—and we've all taken such a fancy to your baby—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, indeed! Such a *good* little thing!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Perfect little angel!"

CAMPBELL: "We almost hoped you wouldn't come back for it, and we were just quarrelling about which family it belonged to when you came in."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Well, I guess when I tell John that he'll be ashamed of the way he talked to me about leavin' it with a perfect stranger. But I see by the gentleman's looks that it would be all right, and so I told John. I hope he didn't think I was never coming back, by the way I stayed."

CAMPBELL: "Not for an instant! He's a brother-in-law of mine, and I took him in hand as soon as I came into the car, and we said we knew you'd be right back, and if you didn't come before the train left we'd get off."

THE YOUNG MOTHER: "Well, I wish you good morning! And if any of you *do* ever come down Bangor way—"

THE BRAKEMAN'S VOICE, without: "All aboard!"

THE YOUNG MOTHER, vanishing through the door: "Oh, my good gracious, I shall get left, after all?"

CAMPBELL, as the car starts: "Well, Roberts lied us out of that pretty well, didn't he?" He put his arms across ROBERTS'S shoulders. "But he saved the mother's feelings by it; and I shall never think the worse of you for your fibs, old fellow!"

HER OPINION OF HIS STORY

MISS TEMPLE: "Why is he coming so early?"

MISS LETTICE TEMPLE: "Why, Aunt Catherine, do you call it early?"

MISS TEMPLE: "Why is he coming so early? Gentlemen don't usually call at ten o'clock in the forenoon."

LETTICE: "Oh, certainly, if you look at it in that light." She goes about the verandah of the cottage, opening seaward over a stretch of informal lawn, and closed at either end with meshes of honeysuckle in bloom. "I think these flowers are rather oppressive, don't you?" She gives a series of superfluous touches to the summer furnishings of the place, especially the arrangement of the cushions in a deep arm-chair. "I suppose he'll hate them, anyway, and tumble them all on to the floor!" She

retires a step or two, and considers the cushions. Then she puts a willow table at the side of the chair, and regards it with a thoughtful glance. "Or would you put it in front?"

MISS TEMPLE, looking austerely up from the needle she is threading over a lapful of work overflowing from a basket, held in place by an adamantine rigidity of the knees, and an iron compression of the lips: "What in the world are you doing, Lettice? And why don't you answer my question?" She pulls the thread out its full length, and knots it without removing her thumb and finger.

LETTICE: "Well, of course, he wouldn't naturally come so early. But—I said he might."

MISS TEMPLE: "You said he might?"

LETTICE: "He asked if he mightn't."

MISS TEMPLE: "Then it's an appointment!"

LETTICE: "I don't know whether I should call it an appointment."

MISS TEMPLE: "It has every appearance of it. What's the table for? Are you going to give him afternoon tea at this time of the morning?"

LETTICE, with a touch of indignation:

"Tea! Certainly not! It's for his manuscript. He said he should like to bring it."

MISS TEMPLE: "Really, this is mystery upon mystery. I don't know what to make of you, Lettice. What are you up to?"

LETTICE: "I don't like being supposed to be 'up' to anything, Aunt Catherine. It's a very simple matter. Why do you make a mystery of it?"

MISS TEMPLE: "I'm only too glad to make anything at all of it. If you like I will go away."

LETTICE: "How can you say such a thing, Aunt Catherine? I wouldn't have you, for anything. And I don't believe *he* would, either. You must certainly stay and receive him, at least."

MISS TEMPLE: "Very well! It's a beautiful morning."

LETTICE: "So it is. I hadn't noticed." She approached with a somewhat wistful air. Not being encouraged in her advances by her aunt, who is sewing with a certain degree of resentment, she sinks into the chair next her, and dangles the fringe of its knotted scarf through her fingers. "I think that was such a pretty custom, tying scarfs through the backs of chairs. He's put the time back in that period, you know.

He thinks the middle eighteen-seventies was the most charming period of any. He got to telling me about it, just before we began to break up last night, and I thought it was very interesting, and he asked me if he might tell me *all* about it some time, and of course I said yes, and he asked if he mightn't come this morning, and of course I couldn't refuse. Do you think it was very odd?"

MISS TEMPLE: "I haven't the least idea what you are talking about, my dear." She lifts her eyes from her sewing, and glances at her niece's face, which droops. "What is it, and why should he want to tell you all about it?"

LETTICE: "Of course it must sound ridiculous to you, Aunt Catherine; but he said he wanted my criticism. He said that I had a great deal of insight; I'm sure I don't know what he meant. I never knew that I was much of a judge of stories."

MISS TEMPLE: "What has that got to do with it?"

LETTICE: "Why, that 's the whole thing. He 's been writing a story. Well, it isn't the first one he 's written, but it 's the first he has any real chance of getting accepted, as he calls it. The editor sent back something he had done, with just a printed notice

that editors use for such things, but he wrote with a pen at the bottom of the notice, and said that he should be glad to see anything else that Mr. Holyford did. Mr. Holyford said this was going pretty far, for an editor, and so he was doing his best, and he doesn't want to offer it till he 's got it quite perfect. He 's read it to a friend of his, but he says he would like a woman's view of it, and—and—he wants to submit it to me."

MISS TEMPLE: "Oh! I thought Mr. Holyford was a lawyer."

LETTICE: "This is just in the intervals of practice, he says. He 's only just out of the law school. He writes fiction when he has nothing else to do."

MISS TEMPLE: "Oh, that is the way."

LETTICE: "Yes, that is the way. He says that if a man makes a hit in literature, it 's a great thing, and a good deal better than the law is at the beginning. He would rather be a literary man, anyway."

MISS TEMPLE: "Does he go round telling everybody that? I shouldn't think it would be very good for his law practice."

LETTICE, thoughtfully: "I don't suppose he tells *every*body. But he got to talking, last night, and he said he wanted me to believe that he didn't often talk so much about

himself. He said he was quite ashamed; but it was so seldom you met a listener—one who could understand at the first word—that he was tempted to go on before he knew it. He has very little sympathy in his own family, I think. He says his father says he had better go fishing in the intervals of practice. Of course he laughed when he told me, but I could see that he felt it. He has a great deal of humour; though this isn't a humorous story. He did write poetry at one time, but he 's dropped that. He thinks that if a man has really anything to say he can say it best in prose."

MISS TEMPLE: "Is he going to read his story to you?"

LETTICE: "No, he says he won't do that. But he is going to bring it, and refer to it. He 's got it all type-written, so that if it interests me, he can let me have it to read myself. That 's the reason I wanted to arrange the table, so that he can open it conveniently when he wants to refer to it. Don't you think that 's a good idea?"

MISS TEMPLE, rising, and gathering her sewing into her basket: "Well, you won't want me here listening."

LETTICE: "Do you think you ought to go, Aunt Catherine? Well!" She gathers

up some of the sewing which has dropped from the basket, and holds it provisionally in her hand. Then, as if struck by a sudden inspiration: "Aunt Catherine! I believe he would rather have you stay. He said himself that two heads were better than one."

MISS TEMPLE: "Yes, but three are not. Give me that, Lettice." She indicates with a gesture of her chin where LETTICE shall put the piece of sewing.

LETTICE, putting it behind her: "No, I won't do it, Aunt Catherine. It looks as if I had no confidence in you."

MISS TEMPLE: "Why, goodness, child! You talk as if you wanted my opinion of the young man himself? Now I wish you to tell me how far this has gone. When I asked you here, and promised your mother that I would take good care of you, I didn't expect— You are too young, altogether."

LETTICE: "I don't see why I should be so very young. I'm eighteen. But that has nothing to do with it. He wishes my opinion of his story, and that is all. If you are suspicious of me, Aunt Catherine, you had better stay, decidedly. I shall not know where to look, now, when he's talking."

MISS TEMPLE: "You had better look at him, then. At any rate, I shall not stay to see where you look, if you think I'm suspicious of you." She rises, and moves proudly towards the door.

LETTICE, placing herself quickly before her: "No, Aunt Catherine. I didn't mean that."

MISS TEMPLE: "You said it. Let me pass, please." LETTICE does not move. "Do you hear me, Lettice?"

LETTICE: "You must stay here to receive him with me. Oh!" At the sound of a step on the verandah stairs she utters a nervous whoop, and with a sudden dash round her aunt's figure she vanishes indoors, while MR. HOLYFORD, with a flat parcel, as of manuscript, under his arm, comes towards MISS TEMPLE. He extends his hand tentatively, but realising that one of MISS TEMPLE'S hands is preoccupied with her sewing-basket and the other with her skirt, he converts his proposed greeting into a graceful gesticulation.

HOLYFORD: "How do you do, Miss Temple? I am afraid you don't remember me: Mr. Holyford. I was here at the Kelp Inn, last summer."

MISS TEMPLE: "Oh yes, Mr. Holyford. Won't you sit down. My niece was expect-

ing you." She sits down herself, and waves him to the chair prepared for him.

HOLYFORD: "Thank you, but won't you take this chair yourself? It's more comfortable."

MISS TEMPLE: "This is my chair." She keeps her seat decisively. "It's low, and nicer for sewing." She takes the piece of work from the top of her basket, and unfolds it. "Besides, Lettice got that ready for you, with the table to put your manuscript on."

HOLYFORD: "She has told you of my audacious proposition? I only brought it along for reference. It isn't so bad as if I were going to read it to her. She told you—"

MISS TEMPLE: "—that you were going to ask her criticism of your story. She's very much flattered. It isn't often that authors submit their work to Lettice."

HOLYFORD: "So much the worse for authors, if they have the chance. I feel very much flattered myself. I think Miss Lettice's intuitions are—are most valuable. I only hope she won't find me and my story too tiresome, or my story alone."

MISS TEMPLE, non-committally: "She seemed anxious to hear it."

HOLYFORD: "Did she? I'm awfully glad. I proposed it on the impulse of the moment, yesterday evening, and I spent the rest of the night composing appropriate names for myself. I think some of them would have pleased my father. He doesn't go in much for my fiction." HOLYFORD attempts a gratuitous hilarity, and rather fails of imparting gaiety to his laugh. At least it does not infect MISS TEMPLE, who has resumed her sewing seriously.

MISS TEMPLE: "May I ask what kind of story it is?"

HOLYFORD: "Well— Are you much opposed to psychological novels?"

MISS TEMPLE: "Is it a question of *my* opinion?"

HOLYFORD, laughing with rather more enjoyment: "Well, yes, provisionally."

MISS TEMPLE: "You mean till Lettice comes?"

HOLYFORD: "I shall be glad to have it, even after she comes."

MISS TEMPLE, looking over her shoulder towards the door: "I'm sure I don't know what's keeping her. Ah! There she comes."

HOLYFORD: "Just as they do in plays! A character is no sooner mentioned than the

person comes in; I've often noticed it. And the others always hear them coming, and say they're coming." He goes forward, and offers LETTICE his hand. "You see how punctual I am. But if you are sorry, you know you can have a headache. Only, you ought to have had it behind the scenes, and sent word. Now it will be doubly difficult to get rid of me. But say the word!"

LETTICE, embarrassed: "You know Mr. Holyford, Aunt Catherine?"

HOLYFORD: "I've been introducing myself as hard as I can, and trying to make her believe she remembers my being at the Kelp Inn last summer. I don't know whether I told you I had put the scene at the Kelp Inn?"

LETTICE: "Have you? I always thought it was so picturesque."

HOLYFORD: "And such a good name. Yes; there, and at a cottage in the neighbourhood. It works in nicely, and marks that pseudo-æsthetic period perfectly—or the beginning of it. I've made a very careful study of the period: got in Eastlake furniture and the last of the hoop-skirts. It's just the end of the Franco-Prussian war, and I've had my fellow out there

fighting on the French side. He's an ardent Republican."

LETTICE: "Republican?"

HOLYFORD: "Yes. He's an American, and after the fall of Louis Napoleon, he stays on through the siege of Paris, and helps fight the Germans."

LETTICE: "Oh! *That* kind of Republican. I thought you meant a Roosevelt man."

HOLYFORD: "How delightfully actual you are, Miss Temple! It almost makes me sorry I hadn't laid the scene in the present time. But as it is, I suspect I've got my heroine too modern. It's she I want to tell you about more particularly. I've tried to keep her back in that period, by having her rather *petite*. You know the latter-day girl is so tall."

LETTICE: "Oh!"

HOLYFORD, laughing, and bowing to her: "Well, not invariably. But that was the time before tall girls came in so much. I make up for it by having the hero rather tall—quite tall, in fact." As they stand confronting each other, he overtops her by a head.

LETTICE: "Hadn't we better sit down? You can throw the cushions out if you don't

want them. But I thought you would like a table to put your manuscript on."

HOLYFORD: "Oh, thank you. But I shan't allow myself to use it for fear I might get to reading my story." Where he has sat down, he holds the tied-up parcel on his knees, with his hands nervously outspread on it, as if to keep it down.

LETTICE, demurely, from where she sits diagonally from him, with her face three-quarters averted: "I 'm sure I should be very glad to hear it."

HOLYFORD, impulsively: "Should you really? You tempt me almost beyond my strength. But as I was saying— I don't remember just what I was saying!"

LETTICE: "That it was after the Franco-Prussian war."

HOLYFORD: "Oh, thank you. He comes back and throws himself heart and soul into Civil Service Reform. He 's seen the rottenness of the Second Empire, and he wants to save us from the same thing. But that 's a detail. The main thing is that he hasn't a cent, and that when he sees Dorrance —Do you like the name? Dorrance?"

LETTICE: "Yes, it 's so quaint! Is it a girl's name?"

HOLYFORD: "I 'm sure I don't know. If

it isn't I can change it. I don't know where I got it exactly. I think your *own* name is charming, Miss Temple. I beg your pardon! I don't mean to be personal."

LETTICE: "Not at all. I like it myself. It's better than Gladys."

HOLYFORD, with scorn: "Oh, Gladys! I'm so glad *my* name is plain Paul. Though I have seen the time when I had my yearnings for Lionel."

LETTICE: "Lionel would go very nicely with Holyford."

HOLYFORD: "Yes, I don't deny it. And I'm rather well satisfied with my surname."

LETTICE: "I believe it was my grandmother's."

HOLYFORD: "What! Holyford? Then we're cousins! *May* I call you cousin?"

LETTICE: "No, Lettice! I don't mean that you may call me Lettice, but that I was called Lettice for my grandmother. Wasn't I, Aunt Ca—" She looks round to where MISS TEMPLE has been sitting. "Why, she's gone!"

HOLYFORD, in dismay: "So she is! I'm sorry. I didn't realise that I was sitting with my back to her. I'm really very much ashamed—"

LETTICE: "Not at all. She'll be back in a moment. And then?"

HOLYFORD: "And when?"

LETTICE: "When he hasn't a cent."

HOLYFORD: "Oh yes! Well, Dorrance has plenty of money, in her own right. Her father is a millionaire— I hope you don't mind her being a millionaire's daughter?"

LETTICE: "Oh, not in the least. I should like to be rich myself."

HOLYFORD: "Well, these are not at all vulgar millionaires; it was when millionaires were just coming in; and when the father accidentally finds out that Paul—I mean Lionel; Hugh, I mean—Hugh Lionel is his name; at any rate provisionally, for if it strikes you as too romantic—"

LETTICE: "I think it's fine."

HOLYFORD: "I'm so glad. When he finds out that Hugh is in love with a girl and won't offer himself because she's rich and he's poor, he argues with him and tries to convince him that he's a fool. I think I've got a great scene, there. I think it's something quite new in fiction, don't you?"

LETTICE: "I never heard of anything like it."

HOLYFORD: "No. And it has to be delicately handled. At the same time it

has to be boldly treated, too. I think I've got over it pretty well. I've managed it humorously, or semi-humorously. The father is Western, and he has all that grotesque Western humour, and argues it out with him, man to man—takes the bull by the horns, you know."

LETTICE: "How perfectly original!"

HOLYFORD: "Yes, isn't it new? I should really like to read that scene to you, Miss Temple, if—"

LETTICE: "Oh, do! I should like it of all things."

HOLYFORD: "Well, if I *must*!" He rises to lay open his manuscript on the table, and confronts MISS TEMPLE, at the door. He starts guiltily back. "Oh!"

LETTICE, jumping to her feet: "Oh!"

MISS TEMPLE: "Oh! I just came to see if I had dropped a spool of—"

HOLYFORD, looking eagerly about the verandah: "Thread? Let me find it for you."

LETTICE, joining in the search: "Where do you think you dropped it, Aunt Catherine?"

MISS TEMPLE, vanishing indoors: "If I knew, I shouldn't be looking for it. But it doesn't the least matter. I can get another."

Then from within: "I've found it. Here it is."

LETTICE and HOLYFORD: "Oh!"

HOLYFORD: "Ought I to have urged her to stay?"

LETTICE: "No, no. It would just have bored her. Go on!"

HOLYFORD: "And bore you?"

LETTICE: "How can you? You know I didn't mean that. Now you shall read me every word, so as to prove that you don't think I meant anything."

HOLYFORD: "Couldn't I convince you with a chapter or two? I understand just what you meant, but I'd really rather tell you about the story than read it. The fact is, that until I've had your judgment on some points, I shouldn't like to read it to you."

LETTICE: "I don't believe my literary judgment is worth anything."

HOLYFORD: "I can't let you say that. Besides, the points are points of psychology."

LETTICE: "Psychology? Isn't that rather formidable?"

HOLYFORD: "Well, say natural history. It's about what a girl would do in a given case."

LETTICE: "I don't believe any living girl could tell you. But what case?"

HOLYFORD: "Well, it's rather difficult. Why are we standing up? I don't want to go, yet!"

LETTICE: "And I don't want you to." They both laugh and sit down. "Well?"

HOLYFORD: "Well, it's something that comes up, after the father has had his talk with the hero. The hero gives the heroine a hint of his position, and then, as they know each other's feelings— I'm afraid you'll think it's rather a daring experiment!"

LETTICE: "Oh, I like those daring things."

HOLYFORD: "Do you, indeed? Do you think I could venture to have him perfectly frank with her, and tell her that the consciousness of his being poor and her being rich forbids him to think of her love?"

LETTICE: "She wouldn't understand him, and so she couldn't argue the point. But it would be very interesting if she could. If she really cared for him, she couldn't think of herself at all. Not if she was a *real* girl."

HOLYFORD: "I want her to be a real girl." He muses a moment, before yielding to an

impulse. "Miss Lettice, I don't believe you girls know how terrible you are to us poor fellows. I mean, how much we're afraid of you. I don't believe any man would have the courage to offer himself to a girl—unless—"

LETTICE: "But if the hero hasn't offered himself, how can he expect her to refuse him?"

HOLYFORD: "I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of the matter in the abstract."

LETTICE: "I don't believe a real girl can do anything in the abstract. She has got to have an actual case. Does Dorrance convince Hugh that her money doesn't matter?"

HOLYFORD: "How nice of you to remember their names! Why, you see, if she convinces him, then they get married, and the story stops."

LETTICE, thoughtfully: "That is true."

HOLYFORD: "I can't have my story stop in the second chapter, and so I had fancied having him tell her that until he can come back to her with as much money as she has he can never ask her to be his."

LETTICE, fired with the idea: "That would be *grand*! And then I suppose you

have him go off, and have a lot of adventures, trying to make the money. It would be splendid to have him shipwrecked, somewhere, and find a hidden treasure on the island."

HOLYFORD: "Well, yes. But I am afraid that would seem too easy. I have him go into business, and try to make the money. Of course, it would be slow work in any case; he isn't a very good business man, and he 's a good many years about it. Once or twice he loses his money, and has to begin over again. It gives me plenty of room for my story, but I 'm afraid people won't like her marrying somebody else in the meanwhile."

LETTICE: "A real girl would never do that in the world!"

HOLYFORD: "Wouldn't she? I 'm sorry. You see, she has to be doing something, while they are both getting along in the thirties; and the grey hairs are beginning to show themselves. I *had* thought of her going into some sort of university settlement work, but it's hard to make that attractive, and it doesn't involve as much suffering as I should like to have in. As the story now stands, I have her marry, and then, when he has lost his money the second time, and is prostrated by the blow, she comes to him—"

LETTICE: "Oh, do you think she would?"

HOLYFORD: "Well, that's just the question. I was in hopes you would think she might. It's rather a pet scene with me when they meet and argue it over the second time."

LETTICE: "Of course, not explicitly; but with a perfect understanding?"

HOLYFORD: "Not exactly, or not absolutely. What should you think of my having him die, and leave the problem for each reader to solve in his own way?"

LETTICE: "I don't believe I should like that. Why couldn't they get married?"

HOLYFORD: "They do in one of the endings. I've written two. That's the great point I wanted to submit to you. Of course people like a good ending, but I can't help feeling that it would be more artistic, and more powerful to have him die."

LETTICE: "But wouldn't it be nicer to have her marry him, when they suppose he's going to die, and then nurse him back to life and health?"

HOLYFORD: "The critics might say it was taking an advantage of his helplessness."

LETTICE: "Oh, you oughtn't to mind the critics."

HOLYFORD: "I shouldn't if I were sure of *your* approval."

LETTICE: "Then you don't consider me a critic!"

HOLYFORD: "The best in the world. But I want you to be awfully frank. Do you honestly think I could leave it as I've got it?"

LETTICE: "Perhaps it would do. But I don't know that I ever heard of a story with two endings before."

HOLYFORD: "I don't mean that part." Laughing. "That would be rather a joke." Seriously: "It mightn't be such a bad notion, though. It would certainly be novel. No, of course, it wouldn't do. What I meant was, do you think I could have her come, and when she sees that he won't have the courage to offer himself—"

LETTICE: "I don't believe any girl would do it."

HOLYFORD: "But now she is a widow."

LETTICE, thoughtfully: "That is true. Perhaps that does make a difference. Perhaps a widow might."

HOLYFORD: "And I've got a great scene out of it. I make it the climax. But after all that isn't the point, the psychological point."

LETTICE: "Isn't it? I don't see how anything could be more psychological."

HOLYFORD: "Well, you see the case is this. They have to understand each other fully before he comes to her and tells her that he can't marry her till he's as rich as she is, and I want to arrange it so that they shall understand each other without saying anything."

LETTICE, falteringly: "I don't believe I know what you mean."

HOLYFORD: "Miss Lettice, do you believe that a girl ever thinks a man cares for her before he tells her in so many words?"

LETTICE: "I—I don't believe— That is, I don't think—a real girl does."

HOLYFORD: "That's discouraging. I've got to manage it somehow. She must know that he is in love with her, and yet he must not tell her so, till he tells her that he can't offer himself because she is rich and he is poor. If he has offered himself, in so many words, and asked her to be his wife, already, then he can't tell her that she's too rich for him, without seeming to want to get out of it for some other reason. Besides, if she doesn't know that he cares for her, and that she cares for him, she might say, 'Nobody asked you, sir.'"

LETTICE: "That is true."

HOLYFORD: "You see the point, don't you? It has to be very delicately contrived, somehow."

LETTICE: "Oh yes."

HOLYFORD: "It was what I hoped you could help me about. But if you say it couldn't happen, I must give it up and try something else. You don't believe it could happen in some cases?"

LETTICE: "Oh, I don't say it couldn't happen. I suppose—"

HOLYFORD: "Suppose what?"

LETTICE: "Nothing!"

HOLYFORD: "Oh, but do suppose something, Miss Lettice! Make the case your own."

LETTICE: "But how could I? I'm not rich."

HOLYFORD: "Oh, but there are other things—more precious than riches, more—more— Can't you imagine that you—that is, that some one—some one very much attached to you might want to find out— Or, no, that isn't the point, either." He has been leaning forward in her direction, and speaking very rapidly, and stopping abruptly, and then beginning again. Now he falls back in his chair with a long breath. "I don't see how it can be done."

LETTICE: "I shouldn't give it up if I were you. It's so original."

HOLYFORD, laughing ruefully: "It's *too* original, I 'm afraid. You can't have a thing happen that actually never happened in the world before."

LETTICE: "Not very well. But lots of things happen in stories that never happened in the world, don't they?"

HOLYFORD: "You might say that. But what I've planned seems rather indelicate. If he finds out that she likes him without asking her, won't she think it's selfish and sneaking of him? Wouldn't she despise him for it?"

LETTICE: "I don't know whether she would despise him, exactly." She gives the question apparently thoughtful attention, looking down at the toe of her slipper.

HOLYFORD: "It's essential to the story that he should know she likes him, and that she should know he knows; or else it's impossible for her to take that step at the end, which forms the only possible dénouement, unless we have them both die."

LETTICE, faintly: "You oughtn't to have them die."

HOLYFORD: "No, it's begging the question. And I don't see how I can have them

marry. Of course, she can't approach the subject, and he wouldn't have the courage."

LETTICE: "He might, if he thought he was dying. I've read stories where they did. I don't believe but what you can make it come out all right."

HOLYFORD, hopefully: "Don't you, Miss Lettice? And you think that I—if he, that is—I mean if— No, no, I don't mean that. I don't know where I was!"

LETTICE: "Then, why not begin at the beginning, and—"

HOLYFORD: "Oh, there never was any beginning, and there never will be any ending! I believe it was ordained from everlasting to everlasting. Lettice! Don't you see that it's you,—I mean that it's I—I mean, don't you know that I care all the world for you?" He starts toward her, and she rises phantomlike to her feet.

LETTICE, in a ghostly whisper: "Then—then, it was all a pretence! You didn't want my opinion—"

HOLYFORD: "I wanted you!"

LETTICE: "You wanted to play upon me, and find out what a girl would do—would say—would—Oh!"

HOLYFORD: "Yes, indeed! What would you say if I told you what I *have* told you, and what would you do? Don't tell me you never can care for me."

LETTICE, with a nervous burst: "Oh, it's all horrid, horrid! You mixed me up so that I don't know which is which, and I never can look myself in the face again! How could you? How could you?" She dashes by him as he tries to intercept her, and escapes down the steps and over the lawn. HOLYFORD stands clutching his head with both hands. MISS TEMPLE appears in the doorway from the house.

MISS TEMPLE: "What is the matter? Why is LETTICE running away?"

HOLYFORD: "O MISS TEMPLE, I've made such a fool of myself. I've tried to tell MISS LETTICE that I— I began to tell her about my story. I didn't mean—to tell her—or not to-day; but it turned into that, before I knew it. I was tempted on and on, and now she says I've mixed her up so that she doesn't know which is which, and I know she loathes us both!"

MISS TEMPLE: "Both?"

HOLYFORD: "Yes—my story and me!"

MISS TEMPLE: "You? What have *you* got to do with it?"

HOLYFORD, stopping before her in distractedly rushing to and fro on the verandah: "Everything! Don't you understand that Lettice is all the world to me? And that I've told her so?"

MISS TEMPLE: "Be still a moment! And what did she say?"

HOLYFORD: "She said—she said my story was horrid."

MISS TEMPLE: "What has your story to do with it? Did you offer her your story or yourself?"

HOLYFORD: "Oh, don't laugh at me, Miss Temple! What shall I do? What would *you* do, in my place?"

MISS TEMPLE, grimly and somewhat contemptuously: "Well, if she simply said my story was horrid, I think I should go after her and ask her what she meant."

HOLYFORD: "*Would* you, Miss Temple? Oh, bless you, bless you! And you don't think—"

MISS TEMPLE: "How do I know? But it's the only way."

HOLYFORD, plunging wildly down the steps, and over the lawn toward LETTICE, where she is seen in half-length above the rocks: "Bless—"

MISS TEMPLE, going to the edge of the verandah, and watching, till HOLYFORD comes up to LETTICE: "Simpleton!" Then she starts back and runs indoors. "Oh! Oh!"

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